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The Return of the O'Mahony. A romantic fantasy ... With illustrations.

Harold Frederic



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Frederic, Harold

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THE O'MAHONY LANDING HIS FORCES.

THE RETURN OF THE O'MAHONY

A ROMANTIC FANTASY

BY

HAROLD FREDERIC

AUTHOR OF 'IN THE VALLEY,' 'THE NEW EXODUS,' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON
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THE RETURN OF THE O'MAHONY

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE FATHER OF COMPANY F.

ZEKE TISDALE was the father of Company F. Not that this title had ever been formally conferred upon him, or even recognised in terms, but everybody understood about it. Sometimes Company F was for whole days together exceedingly proud of the relation; but, alas! more often it viewed its parent with impatient levity, not to say contempt. In either case, it seemed all the same to Zeke.

He was by no means the oldest man in the company—at least, as appearances went. Some there were gathered about the camp-fire, this last night in March of '65, who looked almost old enough to be *his* father—gray, gaunt, stiff-jointed old fighters, whose hard service stretched back across four years of warfare to Lincoln's first call for troops, and who laughed now grimly over the joke that they had come out to suppress the Rebellion within ninety days, and

had the job still unfinished on their hands at the end of fourteen hundred.

But Zeke, though his mud-coloured hair and beard bore scarcely a trace of gray, and neither his placid, unwrinkled face nor his lithe, elastic form suggested age, somehow produced an impression of seniority upon all his comrades, young and old alike. He had been in the company from the beginning, for one thing; but that was not all. It was certain that he had been out in Utah at the time of Albert Sidney Johnston's expedition—perhaps had fought under him. It seemed pretty well established that before this Mormon episode he had been with Walker in Nicaragua. Over the mellowing canteen he had given stray hints of even other campaigns which his skill had illumined and his valour adorned. Nobody ever felt quite sure how much of this was true—for Zeke had a child's disregard for any mere veracity which might mar the immediate effects of his narratives—but enough passed undoubted to make him the veteran of the company. And *that* was not all.

For cold-blooded intrepidity in battle, for calm, clear-headed rashness on the skirmish-line, Zeke had a fame extending beyond even his regiment and the division to which he belonged. Men in regiments from distant States, who met with no closer bond than that they all wore the badge of the same army-corps, talked on occasion of the fellow in the —th New York, who had done this, that, or the other dare-devil feat, and yet never got his shoulder-straps. It was when Company F men heard this talk that they were most proud of Zeke—proud sometimes even to the point of keeping silence about his failure to win promotion.

But among themselves there was no secret about this failure. Once the experiment had been made of lifting Zeke to the grade of corporal—and the less said about its

outcome the better. Still, the truth may as well be told. Brave as any lion, or whatever beast should best typify absolute fearlessness in the teeth of deadly peril, Zeke in times of even temporary peace left a deal to be desired. His personal habits—or better, perhaps, the absence of them—made even the roughest of his fellows unwilling to be his tent-mate. As they saw him lounging about the idle camp, he was shiftless, insubordinate, taciturn and unsociable when sober, wearisomely garrulous when drunk—the last man out of fourscore whom the company liked to think of as its father.

And Company F had had nothing to do now for a good while. Through the winter it had lain in its place on the great steel-clad intrenched line which waited, jaws open, for the fall of Petersburg. The ready-made railroad from City Point was at its back, and food was plenty. But now, as spring came on—the wet, warm Virginian spring, with every meadow a swamp, every road a morass, every piece of bright-green woodland an impassable tangle—the strategy of the closing act in the dread drama sent Company F away to the South and West, into the desolate backwoods country where no roads existed, and no foraging, be it never so vigilant, promised food. The movement really reflected Grant's fear lest, before the final blow was struck, Lee should retreat into the interior. But Company F did not know what it meant, and disliked it accordingly, and by the end of the third day in its new quarters was both hungry and quarrelsome.

Evening fell upon a gloomy, rain-soaked day, which the men had miserably spent in efforts to avoid getting drenched to the skin, and in devices to preserve dry spots upon which to sleep at night. Permission to build a fire, which had been withheld ever since their arrival, had only come from division headquarters an hour ago; and as they warmed

themselves now over the blaze, biting the savourless hard-tack, and sipping the greasy fluid of beans and chicory from their tin cups, they still looked sulkily upon the line of lights which began to dot the ridge on which they lay, and noted the fact that their division had grown into an army corps almost as if it had been a grievance. Distant firing had been heard all day, but it seemed a part of their evil luck that it *should* be distant.

They stared, too, with a sullen indifference at the spectacle of a sergeant who entered their camp escorting a half-dozen recruits, and, with stiff salutation, turned them over to the captain at the door of his tent. The men of Company F might have studied these bounty-men, as they stood in file waiting for the company's clerk to fill out his receipt, with more interest, had it been realized that they were probably the very last men to be enrolled by the Republic for the Civil War. But nobody knew that, and the arrival of recruits was an old story in the —th New York, which had been thrust into every available hellpit, it seemed to the men, since their first cruel corner at Bull Run. So they scowled at the newcomers in their fresh, clean uniforms, as they straggled doubtfully toward the fire, and gave them no welcome whatever.

Hours passed under the black sky, into which the hissing, spluttering fire of green wood was too despondent to hurl a single spark. The men stood or squatted about the smoke-ringed pile on rails and fence-boards which they had laid to save them from the soft mud—in silence broken only by fitful words. From time to time the monotonous call of the sentries out in the darkness came to them like the hooting of an owl. Sharp shadows on the canvas walls of the captain's tent and the sound of voices from within told them that the officers were playing poker. Once or twice some moody suggestion of a 'game' fell upon the

smoky air outside, but died away unanswered. It was too wet and muddy and generally depressing. The low west wind which had risen since nightfall carried the threat of more rain.

‘Grant ain’t no good, nor any other dry-land general, in this dripping old swamp of a country,’ growled a grizzled corporal, whose mud-laden heels had slipped off his rail. ‘The nian we want here is Noah. This is his job, and nobody else’s.’

‘There’d be one comfort in that, anyway,’ said another, well read in the Bible. ‘When the rain was all over, he set up drinks.’

‘Don’t you make any mistake,’ put in a third. ‘He shut himself up in his tent, and played his booze solitaire. He didn’t even ask in the officers of the ark and propose a game.’

‘I—I’ve got a small flask with me,’ one of the recruits diffidently began. ‘I was able to get it to-day at Dinwiddie Court House. Paid more for it, I suppose, than——’

In the friendly excitement created by the recruit’s announcement, and his production of a flat, brown bottle, further explanation was lost. Nobody cared how much he had paid. Two dozen of his neighbours took a lively interest in what he had bought. The flask made its tour of only a segment of the circle, amid a chorus of admonitions to drink fair, and came back flatter than ever and wholly empty. But its ameliorating effect became visible at once. One of the recruits was emboldened to tell a story he had heard at City Point, and the veterans consented to laugh at it. Conversation sprang up as the fire began to crackle under a shift of wind, and the newcomers disclosed that they all had clean blankets, and that several had an excess of chewing-tobacco. At this last, all reserve was cleared away. Veterans and recruits spat into

the fire now from a common ground of liking, and there was even some rivalry to secure such thoughtful strangers as tent-mates.

Only one of the newcomers stood alone in the muddiest spot of the circle, before a part of the fire which would not burn. He seemed to have no share in the confidences of his fellow-recruits. None of their stories or reminiscences referred to him, and neither they nor any veteran had offered him a word during the evening.

He was obviously an Irishman, and it was equally apparent that he had just landed. There was an indefinable something in the way he stood, in his manner of looking at people, in the very awkwardness with which his ill-fitting uniform hung upon him, which spoke loudly of recent importation. This in itself would have gone some way toward prejudicing Company F against him, for Castle Garden recruits were rarely popular, even in the newest regiments. But there was a much stronger reason for the cold shoulder turned upon him.

This young man who stood alone in the mud—he could hardly have got half through the twenties—had a repellent, low-browed face, covered with freckles and an irregular stubble of reddish beard, and a furtive squint in his pale, greenish-blue eyes. The whites of these eyes showed bloodshot, even in the false light of the fire, and the swollen lines about them spoke plainly of a prolonged carouse. They were not Puritans, these men of Company F, but with one accord they left Andrew Linsky—the name the roster gave him—to himself.

Time came, after the change of guard, when those who were entitled to sleep must think of bed. The orderly-sergeant strolled up to the fire, and dropped a saturnine hint to the effect that it would be best to sleep with one eye open; signs pointed to a battle next day, and the long

roll might come before morning broke. Their brigade was on the right of a line into which two corps had been dumped during the day, and apparently this portended the hottest kind of a fight; moreover, it was said Sheridan was on the other side of the ridge. Everybody knew what that meant.

'We ought to be used to hot corners by this time,' said the grizzled corporal, in comment; 'but it's the deuce to go into 'em on empty stomachs. We've been on half-rations two days.'

'There'll be the more to go round among them that's left,' said the sergeant grimly, and turned on his heel.

The Irishman, pulling his feet with difficulty out of the ooze into which they had settled, suddenly left his place and walked over to the corporal, lifting his hand in a sidelong, clumsy salute.

'Wud ye moind tellin' me, sur, where I'm to sleep?' he asked, saluting again.

The corporal looked at his questioner, spat meditatively into the embers, then looked again, and answered, briefly:

'On the ground.'

Linsky cast a glance of pained bewilderment, first down at the mud into which he was again sinking, then across the fire into the black, wind-swept night.

'God forgive me for a fool,' he groaned aloud, 'to lave a counthry where even the pigs have straw to drame on.'

'Where did you expect to sleep—in a balloon?' asked the corporal, with curt sarcasm. Then the look of utter hopelessness on the other's ugly face prompted him to add, in a softer tone: 'You must hunt up a tent-mate for yourself—make friends with some fellow who'll take you in.'

'Sorra a wan'll be fri'nds wid me,' said the despondent recruit. 'I'm waitin' yet the furst dacent wurrud from anny of 'em.'

The corporal's face showed that he did not specially blame them for their exclusiveness, but his words were kindly enough.

'Perhaps I can fix you out,' he said, and sent a comprehensive glance round the group which still huddled over the waning fire on the other side.

'Hughie, here's a countryman of yours,' he called out to a lean, tall, gray-bearded private who, seated on a rail, had taken off his wet boots and was scraping the mud from them with a bayonet; 'can you take him in?'

'I have some one already,' the other growled, not even troubling to lift his eyes from his task.

It happened that this was a lie, and that the corporal knew it to be one. He hesitated for a moment, dallying with the impulse to speak sharply. Then, reflecting that Hugh O'Mahony was a quarrelsome and unsociable creature, with whom a dispute was always a vexation to the spirit, he decided to say nothing.

How curiously inscrutable a thing is chance! Upon that one decision turned every human interest in this tale, and most of all, the destiny of the sulky man who sat scraping his boots. The Wheel of Fortune, in this little moment of silence, held him poised within the hair's breadth of a discovery which would have altered his career in an amazing way, and changed the story of a dozen lives. But the corporal bit his lip and said nothing. O'Mahony bent doggedly over his work—and the wheel rolled on.

The corporal's eye, roaming about the circle, fell upon the figure of a man who had just approached the fire and stood in the full glare of the red light, thrusting one boot close to the blaze, while he balanced himself on the other. His ragged hair and unkempt beard were of the colour of the miry clay at his feet. His shoulders, rounded at best, were

unnaturally drawn forward by the exertion of keeping his hands in his pockets, the while he maintained his balance. His face, of which snub nose and gray eyes alone were visible in the frame of straggling hair and under the shadow of a battered forage-cap visor, wore a pleased, almost merry, look in the flickering, ruddy light. He was humming a droning sort of tune to himself as he watched the steam rise from the wet leather.

‘Zeke’s happy to-night ; that means fight to-morrow, sure as God made little fishes,’ said the corporal to nobody in particular. Then he lifted his voice :

‘Got a place in your diggin’s for a recruit, Zeke—say just for to-night?’ he asked.

Zeke looked up, and sauntered forward to where they stood, hands still in pockets.

‘Well—I don’t know,’ he drawled. ‘Guess so—if he don’t snore too bad.’

He glanced Linsky over with indolent gravity. It was plain that he didn’t think much of him.

‘Got a blanket?’ he asked abruptly.

‘I have that,’ the Irishman replied.

‘Anything to drink?’

Linsky produced from his jacket pocket a flat, brown bottle, twin brother to that which had been passed about the camp-fire circle earlier in the evening, and held it up to the light.

‘They called it whisky,’ he said, in apology ; ‘an’ be the price I paid fur it, it moight a’ been doimonds dissolved in angels’ tears ; but the furst sup I tuk of it, faith, I thought it ‘ud tear th’ t’roat from me!’

Zeke had already linked Linsky’s arm within his own, and he reached forth now and took the bottle.

‘It’s p’izen to a man that ain’t used to it,’ he said, with a grave wink to the corporal. ‘Come along with me, Irish ;

mebbe if you watch me close you can pick up points about gittin' the stuff down without injurin' your throat.'

And, with another wink, Zeke led his new-found friend away from the fire, picking his steps through the soft mud, past dozens of little tents propped up with rails and boughs, walking unconsciously toward a strange, new, dazzling future.

CHAPTER II.

THE VIDETTE POST.

ZEKE's tent—a low and lop-sided patchwork of old blankets, strips of waggon-covering and stray pieces of cast-off clothing—was pitched on the high ground nearest to the regimental sentry line. At its back one could discern, by the dim light of the camp-fires, the lowering shadows of a forest. To the west a broad open slope descended gradually, its perspective marked to the vision this night by red points of light, diminishing in size as they receded toward the opposite hill's dead wall of blackness. Upon the crown of this wall, nearly two miles distant, Zeke's sharp eyes now discovered still other lights which had not been visible before.

‘Caught sight of any Rebs yet since you been here, Irish?’ he asked, as the two stood halted before his tent.

‘I saw some prisoners at what they call City Point, the day before yesterday—the most starved and miserable divils ever I laid eyes on. That's what I thought thin, but I know betther now. Sure they were princes compared wid me this noight.’

‘Well, it's dollars to doughnuts them are their lights over yonder on the ridge,’ said Zeke. ‘You'll see enough of 'em to-morrow to last a lifetime.’

Linksy looked with interest upon the row of dim sparks

which now crowned the whole long crest. He had brought his blanket, knapsack and rifle from the stacks outside company headquarters, and stood holding them as he gazed.

'Faith,' he said at last, 'if they're no more desirous of seeing me than I am thim, there's been a dale of throuble wasted in coming so far for both of us.'

Zeke, for answer, chuckled audibly, and the sound of this was succeeded by a low, soft gurgling noise, as he lifted the flask to his mouth and threw back his head. Then, after a satisfied 'A-h !' he said :

'Well, we'd better be turning in now,' and kicked aside the door-flap of his tent.

'And is it here we're to sleep?' asked Linsky, making out with difficulty the outlines of the little hut-like tent.

'I guess there won't be much sleep about it, but this is our shebang. Wait a minute.' He disappeared momentarily within the tent, entering it on all-fours, and emerged with an armful of sticks and paper. 'Now you can dump your things inside there. I'll have a fire out here in the jerk of a lamb's tail.'

The Irishman crawled in in turn, and presently, by the light of the blaze his companion had started outside, was able to spread out his blanket in some sort, and even to roll himself up in it, without tumbling the whole edifice down. There was a scant scattering of straw upon which to lie, but underneath this he could feel the chill of the damp earth. He managed to drag his knapsack under his head to serve as a pillow, and then, shivering, resigned himself to fate.

The fire at his feet burned so briskly that soon he began to be pleasantly conscious of its warmth stealing through the soles of his thick, wet shoes.

'I'm thinkin' I'll take off me boots,' he called out. 'Me feet are just perished wid the cold.'

‘No. You couldn’t get ’em on again, p’r’aps, when we’re called, and I don’t want any such foolishness as that. When we get out, it’ll have to be at the drop of the hat—double quick. How many rounds of cartridges you got?’

‘This bag of mine they gave me is that filled wid ’em the weight of it would tip an outside car.’

‘Can you shoot?’

‘I don’t know if I can. I haven’t tried that same yet.’

A long silence ensued, Zeke squatting on a cracker-box beside the fire, flask in hand, Linsky concentrating his attention upon the warmth at the soles of his feet, and drowsily mixing up the Galtee Mountains with the fire-crowned hills of a strange, new world, upon one of which he lay. Then all at once he was conscious that Zeke had crept into the tent, and was lying curled close beside him, and that the fire outside had sunk to a mass of sparkless embers. He half rose from his recumbent posture before these things displaced his dreams; then, as he sank back again, and closed his eyes to settle once more into sleep, Zeke spoke:

‘Don’t do that again! You got to lie still here, or you’ll bust the hull combination. If you want to turn over, tell me, and we’ll flop together—otherwise you’ll have the thing down on our heads.’

There came another pause, and Linsky almost believed himself to be asleep again. But Zeke was wakeful.

‘Say, Irish,’ he began, ‘that country of yours must be a pretty tough place if this kind of thing strikes you fellows as an improvement on it.’

‘Sur,’ said Linsky, with sleepy dignity, ‘there’s no other counthrey on earth fit to buckle Ireland’s shoes—no offence to you.’

‘Yes, you always give us that; but if it’s so fine a place, why in hell don’t you stay there? What do you all pile over here for?’

'I came to America on business,' replied Linsky stiffly.

'Business of luggin' bricks up a ladder?'

'Sur, I'm a solicitor's clark.'

'How do you mean—"Clark"? Thought your name was Linsky?'

'It's what you call "clurk"—a lawyer's clurk—and I'll be a lawyer mesilf in toime.'

'That's worse still. There's seven hundred times as many lawyers here already as anybody wants.'

'I had no intintion of stopping. My business was to foind a certain man, the heir to a great estate in Ireland, and thin to returrin; but I didn't foind my man—and—sure, it's plain enough I didn't returrin, ayether; and I'll go to sleep now, I'm thinkin'.'

Zeke paid no attention to the hint.

'Go on,' he said. 'Why didn't you go back, Irish?'

'It's aisy enough,' Linsky replied, with a sigh. 'Tin long weeks was I scurryin' from wan ind of the land to the other, lukkin' for this invisible divil of a Hugh O'Mahony'—Zeke stretched out his feet here with a sudden movement, unnoted by the other—'makin' inquiries here, foindin' traces there, gettin' laughed at somewhere else, till me heart was broke entoirely. "He's in the army," says they. "Whereabouts?" says I. Here, there, everywhere they sint me on a fool's errand. Plinty of places I came upon where he had been, but divil a wan where he was; and thin I gave it up and wint to New York to sail, and there I made some fri'nds, and wint out wid 'em and they spoke fair, and I drank wid 'em, and, faith, whin I woke I was a soldier, wid brass buttons on me and a gun; and that's the truth of it—worse luck! And *now* I'll sleep!'

'And this Hugh What-d'ye-call-him—the fellow you was huntin' after—where did he live before the war?'

''Twas up in New York State, a place they call Tecumsky;

he'd been a shoemaker there for years. I have here among me papers all they know about him and his family there. It wan't much, but it makes his identity plain, and that's the great thing.'

'And what d'ye reckon has become of him?'

'If ye ask me in me capacity as solicitor's clerk, I'd say that, for purposes of law, he'd be alive till Midsummer Day next, and thin doy be process of statutory neglect, and niver know it as long as he lives; but if you ask me proivate opinion, he's as dead as a mackerel; and, if he isn't, he will be in good toime, and divil a ha'porth of shoe-leather will I waste more on him. And *now* good-noight to ye, sur!'

Linsky fell to snoring before any reply came. Zeke had meant to tell him that they were to rise at three and set out upon a venturesome vidette-post expedition together. He wondered now what it was that had prompted him to select this raw and undrilled Irishman as his comrade in the enterprise which lay before him. Without finding an answer, his mind wandered drowsily to another question—ought O'Mahony to be told of the search for him or not? That vindictive and sullen Hughie should be heir to anything seemed an injustice to all good fellows; but heir to what Linsky called a great estate!—that was ridiculous! What would an ignorant cobbler like him do with an estate?

Zeke was not quite clear in his mind as to what an 'estate' was, but obviously it must be something much too good for O'Mahony. And why—sure enough! only a fortnight before, while they were still at Fort Davis, this O'Mahony had refused to mend his boot for him, even though his frost-bitten toes had pushed their way to the daylight between the sole and upper. Zeke could feel the toes ache perceptibly as he thought on this affront. Sleepy as he was, it grew apparent to him that O'Mahony would probably

never hear of that inheritance ; and then he went off bodily into dreamland, and was the heir himself, and violently resisted O'Mahony's attempts to dispossess him, and—and then it was three o'clock, and the sentry was rolling him to and fro on the ground with his foot to wake him.

'Sh-h ! Keep as still as you can,' Zeke admonished the bewildered Linsky, when he, too, had been roused to consciousness. 'We mustn't stir up the camp.'

'Is it desertin' ye are?' asked the Irishman, rubbing his eyes and sitting upright.

'Sh-h ! you fool—no ! Feel around for your gun and knapsack and cap, and bring 'em out,' whispered Zeke from the door of the tent.

Linsky obeyed mechanically, groping in the utter darkness for what seemed to him an age, and then crawling awkwardly forth. As he rose to his feet he could hardly distinguish his companion standing beside him. Only faint, dusky pillars of smoke, reddish at the base, gray above, rising like slenderest palms to fade in the obscurity overhead, showed where the fires in camp had been. The clouded sky was black as ink.

'Fill your pockets with cartridges,' he heard Zeke whisper. 'We'll prob'ly have to scoot for our lives. We don't want no extra load of knapsacks.'

It strained Linsky's other perceptions even more than it did his sight to follow his comrade in the tramp which now began. He stumbled over roots and bushes, sank knee-deep in swampy holes, ran full tilt into trees and fences, until it seemed to him they must have travelled miles, and he could hardly drag one foot after the other. The first shadowy glimmer of dawn fell upon them after they had accomplished a short but difficult descent from the ridge and stood at its foot, on the edge of a tiny, alder-fringed brook. The Irishman sat down on a fallen log for a minute

to rest ; the while Zeke, as fresh and cool as the morning itself, glanced critically about him.

‘ Yes, here we are,’ he said at last. ‘ We can strike through here, get up the side hill, and sneak across by the hedge into the house afore it’s square daylight. Come on, and no noise now !’

Linsky took up his gun and followed once more in the other’s footsteps as well as might be. The growing light from the dull-gray east made it a simpler matter now to get along, but he still stumbled so often that Zeke cast warning looks backward upon him more than once. At last they reached the top of the low hill which had confronted them.

It was near enough to daylight for Linsky to see, at the distance of an eighth of a mile, a small, red farmhouse, flanked by a larger barn. A tolerably straight line of thick hedge ran from close by where they stood, to within a stone’s throw of the house. All else was open pasture and meadow land.

‘ Now bend your back,’ said Zeke. ‘ We’ve got to crawl along up this side of the fence till we git opposite that house, and then, somehow or other, work across to it without bein’ seen.’

‘ Who is it that would see us ?’

‘ Why, you blamed fool, them woods there’—pointing to a long strip of undergrowth woodland beyond the house—‘ are as thick with Johnnies as a dog is with fleas.’

‘ Thin that house is no place for any dacent man to be in,’ said Linsky ; but despite this conviction he crouched down close behind Zeke, and followed him in the stealthy advance along the hedge. It was back-breaking work, but Linsky had stalked partridges behind the ditch-walls of his native land, and was able to keep up with his guide without losing breath.

'Faith, it's loike walking down burrds,' he whispered ahead; 'only that it's two-legged partridges we're after this toime.'

'How many legs have they got in Ireland?' Zeke muttered back over his shoulder.

'Arrah! it's milking-stools I had in moind,' returned Linsky readily, with a smile.

'Sh-h! Don't talk. We're close now.'

Sure enough, the low roof and the top of the big square chimney of stone built outside the red clap-board end of the farmhouse were visible near at hand, across the hedge. Zeke bade Linsky sit down, and, opening the big blade of a huge jack-knife, began to cut a hole through the thorns. Before this aperture had grown large enough to permit the passage of a man's body, full daylight came. It was not a very brilliant affair, this full daylight, for the morning was overcast and gloomy, and the woods beyond the house, distant some two hundred yards, were half lost in mist. But there was light enough for Linsky, idly peering through the bushes, to discern a gray-coated sentry pacing slowly along the edge of the woodland. He nudged Zeke, and indicated the discovery by a gesture.

Zeke nodded, after barely lifting his eyes, and then pursued his whittling.

'I saw him when we first come,' he said calmly.

'And is it through this hole we're goin' out to be kilt?'

'You ask too many questions, Irish,' responded Zeke. He had finished his work and put away the knife. He rolled over now to a half-recumbent posture, folded his hands under his head, and asked:

'How much bounty did you git?'

'Is it me? Faith! I was merely a disbursing agent in the thransaction. They gave me a roll of paper notes, they said, but divil a wan could I foind when I come to mesilf

and found mesilf a soldier. It's thim new fri'nds o' moine that got the bounty.'

'So you didn't enlist to git the money?'

'Sorra a word did I know about enlistin', or bounty, or anything else, for four-and-twenty hours afther the mischief was done. Is it money that 'ud recompinse a man for sittin' here in the mud, waitin' to be blown to bits by a whole plantation full of soldiers, as I am here, God help me? Is it money you say? Faith! I've enough to take me back to Cork twice over. What more do I want? And I offered the half of it to the captain, or ginerel, or whatever he was, to lave me go, when I found what I'd done; but he wouldn't hearken to me.'

Zeke rolled over to take a glance through the hedge.

'Tell me some more about that fellow you were tryin' to find,' he said, with his gaze fixed on the distant sentry. 'What'll happen now that you haven't found him?'

'If he remains unknown until Midsummer Day next, the estate goes to some distant cousins who live convanient to it.'

'And he can't touch it after that, s'posin' he should turn up?'

'The law of adverse possession is twinty years, and only five of 'em have passed. No; he'd have a claim these fifteen years yet. But rest aisy. He'll never be heard of.'

'And you wrote and told 'em in Ireland that he couldn't be found?'

'That I did—or—wait now! What I wrote was that he was in the army, and I was afther searching for him there. Sure, whin I got to New York, what wid the fri'nds and the drink and—and this foine soldiering of moine, I niver wrote at all. It's God's mercy I didn't lose my papers on the top of it all, or it would be if I was likely ever to git out of this aloive.'

Zeke lay silent and motionless for a time, watching the prospect through his hole in the hedge.

'Hungry, Irish?' he asked at last, with laconic abruptness.

'I've a twist on me like the County Kerry in a famine year.'

'Well, then, double yourself up and follow me when I give the word. I'll bet there's something to eat in that house. Give me your gun. We'll put them through first. That's it. Now, then, when that fellow's on f'other side of the house. *Now!*'

With lizard-like swiftness Zeke made his way through the aperture, and, bending almost double, darted across the wet sward toward the house.

Linsky followed him, doubting not that the adventure led to certain death, but hoping that there would be breakfast first.

CHAPTER III.

LINSKY'S BRIEF MILITARY CAREER.

ZEKE, though gliding over the slippery ground with all the speed at his command, had kept a watch on the further corner of the house. He straightened himself now against the angle of the projecting, weather-beaten chimney, and drew a long breath.

‘He didn’t see us,’ he whispered reassuringly to Linsky, who had also drawn up as flatly as possible against the side of the house.

‘Glory be to God!’ the recruit ejaculated.

After a brief breathing spell, Zeke ventured out a few feet, and looked the house over. There was a single window on his side, opening upon the ground-floor. Beckoning to Linsky to follow, he stole over to the window, and, standing his gun against the clapboards, cautiously tested the sash. It moved, and Zeke, with infinite pains, lifted it to the top, and stuck his knife in to hold it up. Then, with a bound, he raised himself on his arms, and crawled in over the sill.

It was at this moment, as Linsky for the first time stood alone, that a clamorous outburst of artillery-fire made the earth quiver under his feet. The crash of noises reverberated with so many echoes from hill to hill that he had no

notion whence they had proceeded, or from what distance. The whole broad valley before him, with its sodden meadows and wet, mist-wrapped forests, showed no sign of life or motion. But from the crest of the ridge which they had quitted before daybreak there rose now, and whitened the gray of the overhanging clouds, a faint film of smoke—while suddenly the air above him was filled with a strange confusion of unfamiliar sounds, like nothing so much as the hoarse screams of a flock of giant wild-fowl; and then this affrighting babel ceased as swiftly as it had arisen, and he heard the thud and swish of splintered tree-tops and trunks falling in the woodland at the back of the house. The Irishman reasoned it out that they were firing from the hill he had left, over at the hill upon which he now stood, and was not comforted by the discovery.

While he stared at the ascending smoke and listened to the din of the cannonade, he felt himself sharply poked on the shoulder, and started nervously, turning swiftly, gun in hand. It was Zeke, who stood at the window, and had playfully attracted his attention with one of the long sides of bacon which the army knew as 'sow-bellies.' He had secured two of these, which he now handed out to Linsky; then came a ham and a bag of meal; and, lastly, a twelve-quart pan of sorghum molasses. When the Irishman had lifted down the last of these spoils, Zeke vaulted lightly out.

'Guess we'll have a whack at the ham,' he said cheerfully. 'It's good raw.'

The two gnawed greedily at the smoked slices cut from the thick of the ham, as became men who had been on short rations. Zeke listened to the firing, and was visibly interested in noting all that was to be seen, and guessed of its effects and purpose, meanwhile, but the ham was an effectual bar to conversation.

Suddenly the men paused, their mouths full, their senses alert. The sound of voices rose distinctly, and close by, from the other side of the house. Zeke took up his gun, cocked it, and crept noiselessly forward to the corner. After a moment's attentive listening here, and one swift, cautious peep, he tiptoed back again.

'Take half the things,' he whispered, pointing to the provisions, 'and we'll get back again to the fence. There's too many of 'em for us to try and hold the house. They'd burn us alive in there!'

The pan of sorghum fell to Linsky's care, and Zeke, with both guns and all the rest in some mysterious manner bestowed about him, made his way, crouching and with long strides, towards the hedge. He got through the hole undiscovered, dragging his burden after him. Then he took the pan over the hedge, while Linsky should in turn crawl through. But the burlier Irishman caught in the thorns, slipped, and clutched Zeke's arm, with the result that the whole contents of the pan were emptied upon Linsky's head.

Then Zeke did an unwise thing. He cast a single glance at the spectacle his comrade presented—with the thick, dark molasses covering his cap like an oilskin, soaking into his hair, and streaming down his bewildered face in streaks like an Indian's war-paint—and then burst forth in a resounding peal of laughter.

On the instant two men in gray, with battered slouch hats and guns, appeared at the corner of the house, looking eagerly up and down the hedge for some sign of a hostile presence. Zeke had dropped to his knees in time to prevent discovery. It seemed to be with a part of the same swift movement that he lifted his gun, sighted it as it ran through the thorns, and fired. While the smoke still curled among the branches and spiked twigs, he had

snatched up Linsky's gun and fired a second shot. The two men in gray lay sprawling and clutching at the wet grass, one on top of the other.

'Quick, Irish ! We must make a break !' Zeke hissed at Linsky. 'Grab what you can and run !'

Linsky, his eyes and mouth full of molasses, and understanding nothing at all of what had happened, found himself a moment later careering blindly and in hot haste down the open slope, the ham and the bag of meal under one arm, his gun in the other hand. A dozen minie-bullets sang through the damp air about him as he tore along after Zeke, and he heard vague volleys of cheering arise from the meadow to his right ; but neither stopped his course.

It was barely three minutes—though to Linsky, at least, it seemed an interminable while—before the two came to a halt by a clump of trees on the edge of the ravine. In the shelter of these broad hemlock trunks they stood still, panting for breath. Then Zeke looked at Linsky again, and roared with laughter till he choked and went into a fit of coughing.

The Irishman had thrown down his provisions and gun, and seated himself on the roots of his tree. He ruefully combed the sticky fluid from his hair and stubble beard with his fingers now, and strove to clean his face on his sleeve. Between the native temptation to join in the other's merriment and the strain of the last few minutes' deadly peril, he could only blink at Zeke and gasp for breath.

'Tight squeak—eh, Irish ?' said Zeke at last, between dying-away chuckles.

'And tell me, now,' Linsky began, still panting heavily, his besmeared face red with the heat of the chase, 'fwhat the divil were we doing up there, annyway ? No Linsky or Lynch—'tis the same name—was ever called coward yet ;



QUICK, IRISH! WE MUST MAKE A BREAK!



but goin' out and defoyin' whole armies single-handed is no fit worrk for solicitors' clarks. Spacheless and sinseless though I was with the dhrink, sure, if they'd told me I was to putt down the Rebellion by mesilf, I'd a' had the wit to decloine.'

'That was a vidette post we were on,' explained Zeke.

'There's a shorter name for it—God save us both from goin' there. But fwhat was the intintion? 'Tis that that bothers me entoirely.'

'Look there!' was Zeke's response. He waved his hand comprehensively over the field they had just quitted, and the Irishman rose to his feet and stepped aside from his tree to see.

The little red farm house was half hidden in a veil of smoke. Dim shadows of men could be seen flitting about its sides, and from these shadows shot forth tongues of momentary flame. The upper end of the meadow was covered thick with smoke, and through this were visible dark masses of men and the same spark-like flashing of fiery streaks. Along the line of the hedge, closer to the house, still another wall of smoke arose, and Linsky could discern a fringe of blue-coated men lying flat under the cover of the thorn-bushes, whom he guessed to be sharp-shooters.

'That's what we went up there for—to start that thing a-goin',' said Zeke, not without pride. 'See the guide—that little flag there by the bushes? That's our regiment. They was comin' up as we skedaddled out. Didn't yeh hear 'em cheer? They was cheerin' for us, Irish—that is, some for us and a good deal for the sow-bellies and ham.'

No answer came, and Zeke stood for a moment longer, taking in with his practical gaze the details of the fight that was raging before him. Half-spent bullets were singing all about him, but he seemed to give them no more thought than in his old Adirondack home he had wasted on

mosquitoes. The din and deafening rattle of this musketry war had kindled a sparkle in his gray eyes.

'There they go, Irish! Gad! we've got 'em on the run! We kin scoot across now and jine our men.'

Still no answer. Zeke turned, and, to his amazement, saw no Linsky at his side. Puzzled, he looked vaguely about among the trees for an instant. Then his wandering glance fell, and the gleam of battle died out of his eyes as he saw the Irishman lying prone at his very feet, his face flat in the wet moss and rotting leaves, an arm and leg bent under the prostrate body. So wrapt had Zeke's senses been in the noisy struggle outside, that he had not heard his comrade's fall.

The veteran knelt, and gently turned Linsky over on his back. A wandering bullet had struck him in the throat. The lips were already colourless, and from their corners a thin line of bright blood had oozed to mingle grotesquely with the molasses on the unshaven jaw. To Zeke's skilled glance it was apparent that the man was mortally wounded—perhaps already dead, for no trace of pulse or heart-beat could be found. He softly closed the Irishman's eyes, and put the sorghum-stained cap over his face.

Zeke rose and looked forth again upon the scene of battle. His regiment had crossed the fence and gained possession of the farm-house, from which they were firing into the woods beyond. Further to the left, through the mist of smoke which hung upon the meadow, he could see that large masses of troops in blue were being pushed forward. He thought he would go and join his company. He would tell the fellows how well Linsky had behaved. Perhaps, after the fight was all over, he would lick Hugh O'Mahony for having spoken so churlishly to him.

He turned at this and looked down again upon the insensible Linsky.

'Well, Irish, you had sand in your gizzard, anyway,' he

said aloud. 'I'll whale the head off 'm O'Mahony, jest on your account.'

Then, musing upon some new ideas which these words seemed to have suggested, he knelt once more, and, unbuttoning Linsky's jacket, felt through his pockets.

He drew forth a leather wallet and a long linen-lined envelope containing many papers. The wallet had in it a comfortable-looking roll of greenbacks, but Zeke's attention was bestowed rather upon the papers.

'So these would give O'Mahony an estate, eh?' he pondered, half aloud, turning them over. 'It 'ud be a tolerable good bet that he never lays eyes on 'em. We'll fix that right now, for fear of accidents.'

He began to kick about in the leaves, as he rose a second time, thinking hard upon the problem of what to do with the papers. He had no matches. He might cut down a cartridge, and get a fire by percussion, but that would take time; so, for that matter, would digging a hole to bury the papers.

All at once his abstracted face lost its lines of labour, and brightened radiantly. He thrust wallet and envelope into his own pocket, and smilingly stepped forward once more to see what the field of battle was like. The farmhouse had become the headquarters of a general and his staff, and the noise of fighting had passed away to the furthest confines of the woods.

'This darned old campaign won't last up'ard of another week,' he said, in satisfied reverie. 'I reckon I've done my share in it, and somethin' to lap over on the next. Nobody 'll be a cent the wuss off if I turn up missin' now.'

Gathering up the provisions and his gun, Zeke turned abruptly, and made his way down the steep side-hill into the forest, each long stride bearing him further from Company F's headquarters.

CHAPTER IV.

THE O'MAHONY ON ERIN'S SOIL.

It became known among the passengers on the *Moldavian*, an hour or so before bedtime on Sunday evening, April 23, 1865, that the lights to be seen in the larboard distance were really on the Irish coast. The intelligence ran swiftly through all quarters of the vessel. Its truth could not be doubted; the man on the bridge said that it truly was Ireland, or, if he had not said so, the ship's barber had.

Excitement over the news reached its highest point in the steerage, two-thirds of the inmates of which hung now lovingly upon the port-rail of the forward deck, to gaze with eager eyes at the far-off points of radiance glowing through the soft northern spring night.

Farther down the rail, from the obscurity of the jostling throng, a stout male voice sent up the opening bars of the dear familiar song, 'The Cove of Cork.' The ballad trembled upon the air as it progressed, then broke into something like sobs, and ceased.

'Ah, Barney,' a sympathetic voice cried out, 'tis no longer the Cove; 'tis Queenstown they're after calling it now. Small wondher the song won't listen to itself be sung!'

'But they haven't taken the Cove away—God bless it!'

the other rejoined bitterly. "'Tis there, beyant the lights, waitin' for its honest name to come back to it when—when things are set right once more.'

'Is it the Cove you think you see yonder?' queried another captiously. 'Thim's the Fastnet and Cape Clear lights. We're fifty miles and more from Cork.'

'Thin if 'twas daylight,' croaked an old man between coughs, 'we'd be in sight of The O'Mahony's castles, or what bloody Cromwell left of them.'

'It's mad ye are, Martin,' remonstrated a female voice. 'They're laygues beyant on Dunmanus Bay. Wasn't I born mesilf at Durrus?'

'The O'Mahony of Murrisk is on board,' whispered someone else, 'returnin' to his estates. I had it this day from the cook's helper. The quantity of mate that same O'Mahony's been 'atin'! An' dhrink, is it? Faith, there's no English nobleman could touch him!'

On the saloon deck, aft, the interest excited by these distant lights was less volubly eager, but it had sufficed to break up the card-games in the smoking-room, and even to tempt some malingering passengers from the cabins below. Such talk as passed among the group lounging along the rail, here in the politer quarter, bore, for the most part, upon the record of the *Moldavian* on this and past voyages, as contrasted with the achievements of other steamships. No one confessed to reverential sensations in looking at the lights, and no one lamented the change of name which, sixteen years before, had befallen the Cove of Cork; but there was the liveliest speculation upon the probabilities of the *Bahama*, which had sailed from New York the same day, having beaten them into the south harbour of Cape Clear, where, in those exciting war times, before the cable was laid, every ocean steamer halted long enough to hurl

overboard its rubber-encased budget of American news, to be scuffled for in the swell by the rival oarsmen of the Cape, and borne by the successful boat to the island, where relays of telegraph clerks then waited day and night to serve Europe with tidings of the Republic's fight for life.

This concentration of thought upon steamer runs and records, to the exclusion of interest in mere Europe, has descended like a mantle upon the first-cabin passengers of our own later generation. But the voyagers in the *Moldavian* had a peculiar warrant for their concern. They had left America on Saturday, April 15, bearing with them the terrible news of Lincoln's assassination in Ford's Theatre the previous evening, and it meant life-long distinction—in one's own eyes at least—to be the first to deliver these tidings to an astounded Old World. Eight days' musing on this chance of greatness had brought them to a point where they were prepared to learn with equanimity that the rival *Bahama* had struck a rock outside somewhere. One of their number, a little Jew diamond merchant, now made himself quite popular by relating his personal recollections of the calamity which befell her sister-ship, the *Anglia*, eighteen months ago, when she ran upon Blackrock in Galway Harbour.

One of these first-cabin passengers, standing for a time irresolutely upon the outskirts of this gossiping group, turned abruptly when the under-sized Hebrew addressed a part of his narrative to him, and walked off alone into the shadows of the stern. He went to the very end, and leaned over the taffrail, looking down upon the boiling, phosphorescent foam of the vessel's wake. He did not care a button about being able to tell Europe of the murder of Lincoln and Seward—for when they left the Secretary was supposed, also, to have been mortally wounded. His anxieties were of a wholly different sort.

He, The O'Mahony of Muirisc, was plainly but warmly clad, with a new, shaggy black overcoat buttoned to the chin, and a black slouch hat drawn over his eyes. His face was clean shaven, and remarkably free from lines of care and age about the mouth and nostrils, though the eyes were set in wrinkles. The upper part of the face was darker and more weather-beaten, too, than the lower, from which a shrewd observer might have guessed that until very recently he had always worn a beard.

There were half a dozen shrewd observers on board the *Moldavian* among its cabin passengers—men of obvious Irish nationality, whose manner with one another had a certain effect of furtiveness, and who were described on the ship's list by distinctively English names, like Potter, Cooper and Smith; and they had watched The O'Mahony of Muirisc very closely during the whole voyage, but none of them had had doubts about the beard, much less about the man's identity. In truth, they looked from day to day for him to give some sign, be it never so slight, that his errand to Ireland was a political one. They were all Fenians—among the advanced guard of that host of Irishmen who returned from exile at the close of the American War—and they took it for granted that the solitary and silent O'Mahony was a member of the Brotherhood. The more taciturn he grew, the more he held aloof, the firmer became their conviction that his rank in the society was exalted and his mission important. The very fact that he would not be drawn into conversation and avoided their company was proof conclusive. They left him alone, but watched him with lynx-like scrutiny.

The O'Mahony had been conscious of this ceaseless observation, and he mused upon it now as he watched the white whirl of churned waters below. The time was close at hand when he should know whether it had meant any-

thing or not; there was comfort in that, at all events. He was less a coward than any other man he knew, but, all the same, this unending espionage had worn upon his nerve. Doubtless, that was in part because sea-voyaging was a novelty to him. He had not been ill for a moment. In fact, he could not remember to have ever eaten and drunk more in any eight days of his life. If it had not been for the confounded watchfulness of the Irishmen, he would have enjoyed the whole experience immensely. But it was evident that they were all in collusion—'in cahoots,' he phrased it in his mind—and had a common interest in noting all his movements. What could it mean? Strange as it may seem, The O'Mahony had never so much as heard of the Fenian Brotherhood.

He rose from his lounging meditation presently, and sauntered forward again along the port deck. The lights from the coast were growing more distinct in the distance, and, as he paused to look, he fancied he could discern a dark line of shore below them.

'I suppose your ancistral estates are lyin' further west, sir?' spoke a voice at his side.

The O'Mahony cast a swift half-glance around, and recognised one of the suspected spies.

'Yes, a good deal west,' he growled curtly.

The other took no offence.

'Sure,' he went on pleasantly, 'the O'Mahonys and the O'Driscolls, not to mintion the McCarthys, chased each other around that counthry yonder at such a divil of a pace it's hard tellin' now which belonged to who.'

'Yes, we did hustle round considerable,' assented The O'Mahony with frigidity.

'You're manny years away from Ireland, sir?' pursued the man.

'Why?'

'I notice you say "yes" and "no." It takes a long absence to tache an Irishman that.'

'I've been away nearly all my life,' said The O'Mahony sharply—'ever since I was a little boy;' and turning on his heel, he walked to the companion-way and disappeared down the stairs.

'Faith, I'm bettin' it's the ginerall himself!' said the other, looking after him.

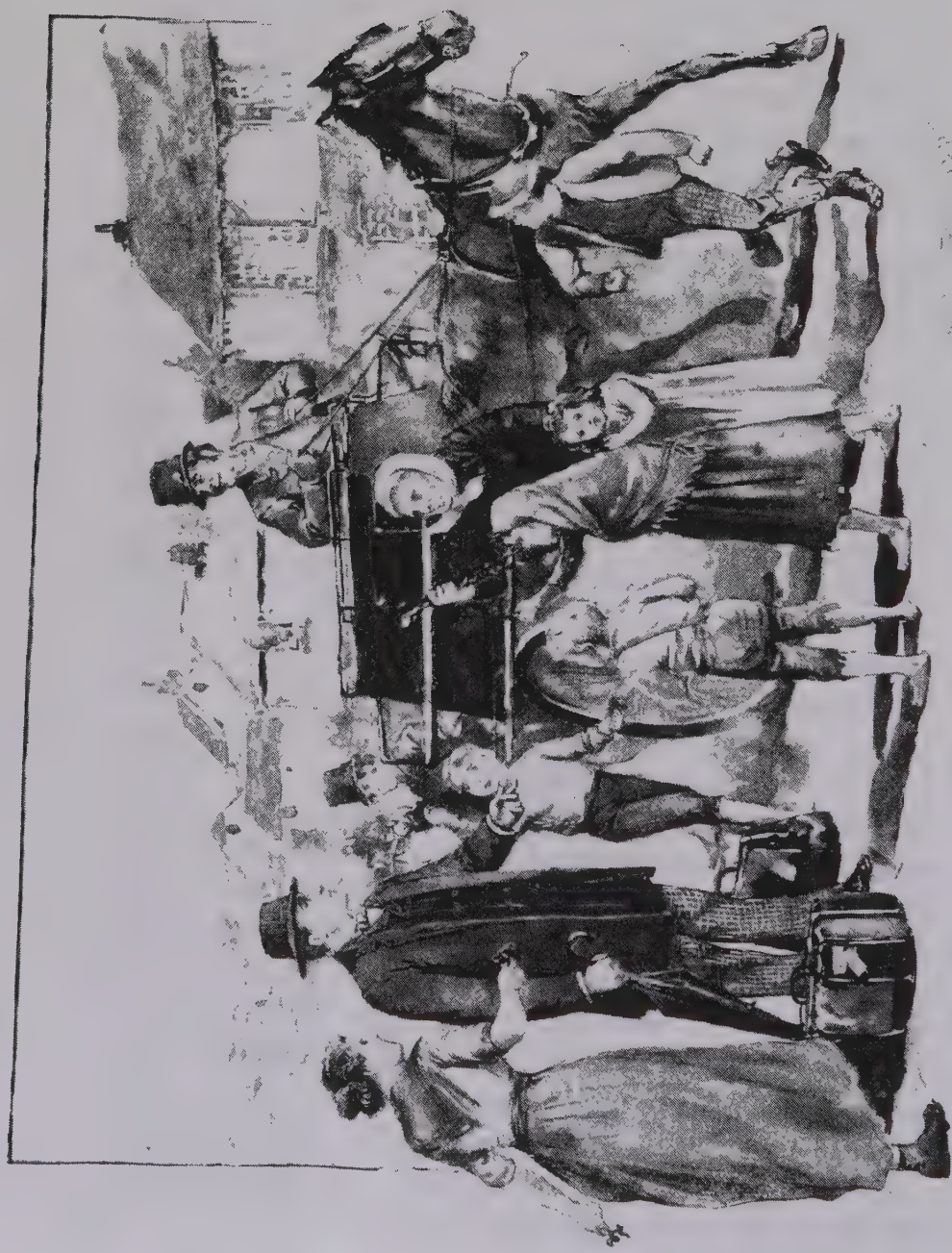
To have one's waking vision greeted, on a soft, warm April morning, by the sight of the Head of Kinsale in the sunlight—with the dark rocks capped in tenderest verdure and washed below by milk-white breakers; with the smooth water mirroring the blue of the sky upon its bosom, yet revealing as well the marbled greens of its own crystalline depths; with the balmy scents of fresh blossoms meeting and mingling in the languorous air of the Gulf Stream's bringing—can there be a fairer finish to any voyage over the waters of the whole terrestrial ball?

The O'Mahony had been up on deck before any of his fellow-passengers, scanning the novel details of the scene before him. The vessel barely kept itself in motion through the calm waters. The soft land breeze just availed to turn the black column of smoke rising from the funnel into a sort of carboniferous leaning tower. The pilot had been taken on the previous evening. They waited now for the tug, which could be seen passing Roche's Point with a prodigious spluttering and splashing of side-paddles. Before its arrival, the *Moldavian* lay at rest within full view of the wonderful harbour—her deck thronged with passengers dressed now in fine shore apparel and bearing bags and rugs, who bade each other good-bye with an enthusiasm which nobody believed in, and edged along as near as possible where the gang-plank would be.

The O'Mahony walked alone down the plank, rebuffing the porters who sought to relieve him of his heavy bags. He stood alone at the prow of the tug, as it waddled and puffed on its rolling way back again, watching the superb amphitheatre of terraced stone houses, walls, groves and gardens toward which he had voyaged these nine long days with an anxious, almost gloomy face. The Fenians, still closely observing him, grew nervous with fear that this depression foreboded a discovery of contraband arms in his baggage.

But no scandal arose. The customs officers searched fruitlessly through the long platforms covered with luggage with a half whimsical and wholly perfunctory air, as if they knew perfectly well that the revolvers they pretended to be looking for were really in the pockets of the passengers. Then other good-byes, distinctly less enthusiastic, were exchanged, and the last bonds of comradeship which life on the *Moldavian* had enforced snapped lightly as the gates were opened.

Everybody else seemed to know where to go. The O'Mahony stood for so long a time just outside the gates, with his two big valises at his feet and helpless hesitation written all over his face, that even some of the swarm of beggars surrounding him could not wait any longer, and went away, giving him up. To the importunities of the others, who buzzed about him like blue-bottles on a sunny window-pane, he paid no heed; but he finally beckoned to the driver of the solitary remaining outside car, who had been flicking his broken whip invitingly at him, and who now turned his vehicle abruptly round and drove it, with wild shouts of factitious warning, straight through the group of mendicants, overbearing their loud cries of remonstrance with his superior voice, and cracking his whip like mad. He drew up in front of the bags with the air of a lord



'RIGHT, YOUR HONOUR'



mayor's coachman, and took off his shapeless hat in salutation.

'I want to go to the law-office of White and Carmody,' The O'Mahony said brusquely.

'Right, your honour!' the carman answered, dismounting and lifting the luggage to the well of the car, and then officiously helping his patron to mount to his sidelong seat. He sprang up on the other side, screamed 'Now thin, Maggie!' to his poor old horse, flipped his whip derisively at the beggars, and started off at a little dog-trot, clucking loudly as he went.

He drove through all the long ascending streets of Queenstown at this shambling pace, traversing each time the whole length of the town, until finally they gained the terraced pleasure-road at the top. Here the driver drew rein, and waved his whip to indicate the splendid scope of the view below—the gray roofs of the houses embowered in trees, the river's crowded shipping, the castellated shore opposite, the broad, island-dotted harbour beyond.

'L'uk there, now!' he said proudly. 'Have yez annything like that in Ameriky?'

The O'Mahony cast only an indifferent glance upon the prospect.

'Yes—but where's White and Carmody's office?' he asked. 'That's what *I* want.'

'Right, your honour!' was the reply; and with renewed clucking and cracking of the dismantled whip, the journey was resumed. That is to say, they wound their way back again down the hill, through all the streets, until at last the car stopped in front of the Queen's Hotel.

'Is it thrue what they tell me, sur, that the Prisidint's murdered?' the jarvey asked, as they came to a halt.

'Yes—but where the devil is that law-office?'

'Sure, your honour, there's no such names here at all,' the

carman replied pleasantly. 'Here's the hotel where all gintlemen stop, an' I've shown ye the view from the top, an' it's plased I am ye had such a clear day for it—and wud ye like to see Smith-Barry's place after lunch?'

The stranger turned round on his seat to the better comment upon this amazing impudence, beginning a question harsh of purpose and profane in form.

Then the spectacle of the ragged driver's placidly amiable face and roguish eye; of the funny old horse, like nothing so much in all the world as an ancient hair-trunk with legs at the corners, yet which was driven with the noise and ostentation of a six-horse team; of the harness tied up with ropes; the tumble-down car; the broken whip; the beggars—all this, by a happy chance, suddenly struck The O'Mahony in a humorous light. Even as his angered words were on the air he smiled in spite of himself. It was a gaunt, reluctant smile, the merest curling of the lips at their corners; but it sufficed in a twinkling to surround him with beaming faces. He laughed aloud at this, and on the instant driver and beggars were convulsed with merriment.

The O'Mahony jumped off the car.

'I'll run into the hotel and find out where I want to go,' he said. 'Wait here.'

Two minutes passed.

'These lawyers live in Cork,' he explained on his return. 'It seems this is only Queenstown. I want you to go to Cork with me.'

'Right, your honour!' said the driver, snapping his whip in preparation.

'But I don't want to drive; it's too much like a funeral. We ain't a-buryn' anybody.'

'Is it Maggie your honour manes? Sure, there's no finer quality of a mare in County Cork if she only gets dacent encouragement.'

'Yes ; but we ain't got time to encourage her. Go and put her out, and hustle back here as quick as you can. I'll pay you a good day's wages. Hurry, now ; we'll go by train.'

The O'Mahony distributed all his small silver among the beggars the while he waited in front of the hotel.

'That laugh was worth a hundred dollars to me,' he said, more to himself than to the beggars. 'I hain't laughed before since Linsky spilt the molasses over his head.'

CHAPTER V.

THE INSTALLATION OF JERRY.

THE visit to White and Carmody's law-office had weighed heavily upon the mind of The O'Mahony during the whole voyage across the Atlantic, and it still was the burden of his thoughts as he sat beside Jerry Higgins—this he learned to be the car-driver's name—in the train which rushed up the side of the Lea toward Cork. The first-class compartment to which Jerry had led the way was crowded with people who had arrived by the *Moldavian*, and who scowled at their late fellow-passenger for having imposed upon them the unsavoury presence of the carman. The O'Mahony was too deeply occupied with his own business to observe this. Jerry smiled blandly into the hostile faces, and hummed a 'come-all-ye' to himself.

When, an hour or so after their arrival, The O'Mahony emerged from the lawyers' office, the waiting Jerry scarcely knew him for the same man. The black felt hat, which had been pulled down over his brows, rested with easy confidence now well back on his head; his gray eyes twinkled with a pleasant light; the long face had lost its drawn lines and saturnine expression, and reflected content instead.

'Come along somewhere where we can get a drink,' he said to Jerry; but stopped before they had taken a dozen

steps, attracted by the sign and street-show of a second-hand clothing shop. 'Or no,' he said, 'come in here first, and I'll kind o' spruce you up a bit, so't you can pass muster in society.'

When they came upon the street again, it was Jerry who was even more strikingly metamorphosed. The captious eye of one whose soul is in clothes might have discerned that the garments he now wore had not been originally designed for Jerry. The sleeves of the coat were a trifle long; the legs of the trousers just a suspicion short. But the smile with which he surveyed the passing reflections of his improved image in the shop-windows was all his own. He strode along jauntily, carrying the heavy bags as if they had been mere feather-weight parcels.

The two made their way to a small tavern near the quays, which Jerry knew of, and where The O'Mahony ordered a room, with a fire in it, and a comfortable meal to be laid therein at once.

'Sure, it's not becomin' that I should ate along wid your honour,' Jerry remonstrated, when they had been left alone in the dingy little chamber, overlooking the street and the docks beyond.

At this protest The O'Mahony lifted his brows in unaffected surprise.

'What's the matter with *you*?' he asked, half-derisively; and no more was said on the subject.

No more was said on any subject, for that matter, until fish had succeeded soup, and the waiter was making ready for a third course. Then the founder of the feast said to this menial:

'See here, you, don't play this on me! Jest tote in what ever more you've got, an' put 'er down, an' git out. We don't want you bobbin' in here every second minute, all the afternoon.'

The waiter, with an aggrieved air, brought in presently a tray loaded with dishes, which he plumped down all over The O'Mahony's half of the table.

'That's somethin' like it,' said that gentleman approvingly; 'you'll get the hang of your business in time, young man,' as the servant left the room. Then he heaped up Jerry's plate and his own, ruminated over a mouthful or two, with his eyes searching the other's face—and began to speak.

'Do you know what made me take a shine to you?' he asked, and then made answer: 'Twas on account of your dodrotted infernal cheek. It made me laugh—an' I'd got so it seemed as if I wasn't never goin' to laugh any more. That's why I cottoned to you—an' got a notion you was jest the kind o' fellow I wanted. D'ye know who I am?'

Jerry's quizzical eyes studied his companion's face in turn, first doubtingly, then with an air of reassurance.

'I do not, your honour,' he said at last, visibly restraining the impulse to say a great deal more.

'I'm The O'Mahony of Muirisc, 'an I'm returnin' to my estates.'

Jerry did prolonged but successful battle once more with his sense of humour and loquacious instincts.

'All right, your honour,' he said with humility.

'Maybe I don't look like an Irishman or talk like one,' the other went on, 'but that's because I was taken to America when I was a little shaver, knee-high to a grass-hopper, an' my folks didn't keep up no connection with Irishmen. That's how I lost my grip on the hull Ireland business, don't you see?'

'Sure, your honour, it's as clear as Spike Island in the sunshine.'

'Well, that's how it was. And now my relations over here have died off—that is, all that stood in front of me—and so the estates come to me, and I'm The O'Mahony.'

‘An’ it’s proud ivery mother’s son of your tinints ’ll be at that same, your honour.’

‘At first, of course, I didn’t know but the lawyers ’ud make a kick when I turned up and claimed the thing. Generally you have to go to law, an’ take your oath, an’ fight everybody. But, pshaw! why they jest swallered me slick ’n clean, as if I’d had my ears pinned back an’ be’n greased all over. Never asked “ah,” “yes” or “no.” Didn’t raise a single question. I guess there ain’t no White in the business now. I didn’t see him or hear anything about him. But Carmody’s a reg’lar old brick. There wasn’t nothin’ too good for me after he learnt who I was. But what fetched him most was that I’d seen Abe Lincoln, close to, dozens o’ times. He was crazy to know all about him, an’ the assassination, an’ what I thought ’ud be the next move; so ’t we hardly talked about The O’Mahony business at all. An’ it seems there’s been a lot o’ shenanigan about it, too. The fellow that came out to America to—to find me—Linsky his name was—why, darn my buttons, if he hadn’t run away from Cork, an’ stole my papers along with a lot of others, countin’ on peddlin’ ’em over there an’ collarin’ the money.’

‘Ah, the thief of the earth!’ said Jerry.

‘Well, he got killed there, in about the last battle there was in the war; an’ ’twas by the finding of the papers on him that—that I came by my rights.’

‘Glory be to God!’ commented Jerry, as he buried his jowl afresh in the tankard of stout.

A term of silence ensued, during which what remained of the food was disposed of. Then The O’Mahony spoke again:

‘Are you a man of family?’

‘Well, your honour, I’ve never rightly come by the truth of it, but there are thim that says I’m descinded from the

O'Higginses of Westmeath. I'd not venture to take me Bible oath on it, but——'

'No, I don't mean that! Have you got a wife an' children?'

'Is it me, your honour? Arrah, what girl that wasn't blind an' crippled an' deminted wid fits wud take up wid the likes of me?'

'Well, what is your job down at Queenstown like? Can you leave it right off, not to go back any more?'

'Ah, 'tis no job at all. Sure, I jist take out Mikey Doolan's car, wid that thund'rin' old Maggie, givin' warnin' to fall to pieces on the road in front of me, for friendship—to exercise 'em like. It's not till every other horse and ass in Qucenstown's engaged that anny mortial sowl 'll ride on my car. An' whin I gets a fare, why, I do be after that long waitin' that——'

'That you drive 'em up on top of the hill whether they want to go or not, eh?' asked The O'Mahony, with a grin.

Jerry took the liberty of winking at his patron in response.

'Egor! that's the way of it, your honour,' he said pleasantly.

'So you don't have to go back there at all?' pursued the other.

'Divil a rayson have I for ever settin' fut in the Cove ag'in, if your honour has work for me elsewhere.'

'I guess I can fix that,' said The O'Mahony, speaking more slowly, and studying his man as he spoke. 'You see, I ain't got a man in this hull Ireland that I can call a friend. I don't know nothin' about your ways, no more'n a babe unborn. It took me jest about two minutes, after I got out through the Custom House, to figger out that I was goin' to need someone to sort o' steer me—and need him powerful bad, too. Why, I can't even reckon in your

blamed money, over here. You call a shillin' what we'd call two shillin's, an' there ain't no such thing as a dollar. Now, I'm goin' out to my estates, where I don't know a livin' soul, an' prob'ly they'd jest rob me out o' my eye-teeth, if I hadn't got someone to look after me—someone that knew his way around. D'ye see?

The cab-driver's eyes sparkled, but he shook his curly red head with doubt, upon reflection.

'You've been fair wid me, sur,' he said, after a pause, 'an' I'll not be behind you in honesty. You don't know me at all. What the divil, man!—why, I might be the most rebellious rogue in all County Cork.' He scratched his head with added dubiety, as he went on: 'An' for the matter of that, faith, if you did know me, it's some one else you'd take. There's no one in the Cove that 'ud give me a character.'

'You're right,' observed The O'Mahony. 'I don't know you from a side o' soleleather. But that's my style. I like a fellow, or I don't like him, and I do it on my own hook, follerin' my own notions, and just to suit myself. I've been sizein' you up, all around, an' I like the cut o' your jib. You might be washed up a trifle more p'r'aps, and have your hair cropped; but them's details. The main point is, that I believe you'll act fair and square with me, an' see to it that I git a straight deal!'

'Sur, I'll go to the end of the earth with you,' said Jerry.

He rose, and, by an instinctive movement, the two men shook hands across the table.

'That's right,' said The O'Mahony, referring more to the clasping of hands than to the vow of fealty. 'That's the way I want 'er to stand. Don't call me "yer honour," or any o' that sort o' palaver. I've been a poor man all my life. I ain't used to bossin' niggers around, or playin' off that I'm better'n other folks. Now that I'm returnin' to

my estates, prob'ly I'll have to stomach more or less of that sort o' nonsense. That's one of the things I'll want you to steer me in.'

'An' might I be askin', where are these estates, sur?'

'So far 's I can make out, they're near where we come in sight of Ireland first; it can't be very far from here. They're on the seashore—I know that much. We go to Dunmanway, wherever that is, by the railroad to-morrow, and there the lawyers have telegraphed to have the agent meet us. From there on, we've got to stage it. The place itself is Muirisc, beyond Skull—nice, comfortable, soothin' sort o' names you Irish have for your towns, eh?'

'And what time'll we be startin' to-morrow?'

'The train leaves at noon—that is, for Dunmanway.'

'Thank God for that!' said Jerry, with a sigh of relief.

The O'Mahony turned upon him with such an obviously questioning glance that he made haste to explain:

'I'll be bound your honour hasn't been to Mass since—since ye were like that grasshopper ye spoke about.'

'Mass—no—how d'ye mean? What is it?'

'Luk at that, now!' exclaimed Jerry triumphantly. 'See what 'd 'a' come to ye if ye'd gone to your estates without knowin' the first word of your Christian obligations! We'll rise early to-morrow, and I'll get ye through all the Masses there are in Cork, betune thin an' mid-day.'

'I—gad! I'd clean forgotten that,' said The O'Mahony. 'An' now let's git out an' see the town.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEREDITARY BARD.

Two hours and more of the afternoon were spent before The O'Mahony and his new companion next day reached Dunmanway.

The morning had been devoted, for the most part, to church-going, and The O'Mahony's mind was still confused with a bewildering jumble of candles, bells and embroidered gowns; of boys in frocks swinging little kettles of smoke by long chains; of books printed on one side in English and on the other in an unknown tongue; of strange necessities for standing, kneeling, sitting all together, at different times, for no apparent reason which he could discover, and at no word of command whatever. He meditated upon it all now, as the slow train bumped its wandering way into the west, as upon some novel kind of drill, which it was obviously going to take him a long time to master. He had his moments of despondency at the prospect, until he reflected that if the poorest, least intelligent, hod-carrying Irishman alive knew it all, he ought surely to be able to learn it. This hopeful view gaining predominance at last in his thoughts, he had leisure to look out of the window.

The country through which they passed was for a long distance fairly level, with broad stretches of fair grass fields

and strips of ploughed land, the soil of which seemed richness itself. The O'Mahony noted this, but was still more interested in the fact that stone was the only building material anywhere in sight. The few large houses, the multitude of cabins, the high fences surrounding residences, the low fences limiting farm-lands, even the very gateposts—all were of gray stone, and all as identical in colour and aspect as if Ireland contained but a single quarry.

The stone had come to be a very prominent feature in the natural landscape as well before their journey by rail ended—a cold, wild, hard-featured landscape, with scant brown grass barely masking the black of the bog lands, and dying off at the fringes of gaunt layers of rock which thrust their heads everywhere upon the vision. The O'Mahony observed with curiosity that as the land grew poorer, the population, housed all in wretched hovels, seemed to increase, and the burning fire-yellow of the furze blossoms all about made lurid mockery of the absence of crops.

Dunmanway was then the terminus of the line, which has since been pushed onward to Bantry. The two travellers got out here and stood almost alone on the stone platform with their luggage. They were, indeed, the only first-class passengers in the train.

As they glanced about them, they were approached by a diminutive man, past middle age, dressed in a costume which The O'Mahony had seen once or twice on the stage, but never before in everyday life. He was a clean-shaven, swarthy-faced little man, lean as a withered bean-pod, and clad in a long-tailed coat with brass buttons, a long waistcoat, drab corduroy knee-breeches and gray worsted stockings. On his head he wore a high silk hat of antique pattern, dulled and dusty with extreme age. He took this off as he advanced, and looked from one to the other of the twain doubtingly.

'Is it The O'Mahony of Muirisc that I have the honour to see before me?' he asked, his little ferret eyes dividing their glances in hesitation between the two.

'I'm your huckleberry,' said The O'Mahony, and held out his hand.

The small man bent his shrivelled form double in salutation, and took the proffered hand with ceremonious formality.

'Sir, you're kindly welcome back to your ancestral domain,' he said, with an emotional quaver in his thin, high voice. 'All your people are waitin' with anxiety and pleasure for the sight of your face.'

'I hope they've got us somethin' to eat,' said The O'Mahony. 'We had breakfast at daybreak this morning, so's to work the churches, and I'm——'

'His honour,' hastily interposed Jerry, 'is that pious he can't sleep of a mornin' for pinin' to hear Mass.'

The little man's dark face softened at the information. He guessed Jerry's status by it as well, and nodded at him while he bowed once more before The O'Mahony.

'I took the liberty to order some slight refreshments at the hotel, sir, against your coming,' he said. 'If you'll do me the condescension to follow me, I will conduct you thither without delay.'

They followed their guide, as he, bearing himself very proudly and swinging his shoulders in rhythm with his gait, picked his way across the square, through the mud of the pig-market, and down a narrow street of ancient, evil-smelling rookeries, to the chief tavern of the town—a cramped and dismal little hostelry, with unwashed children playing with a dog in the doorway, and a shock-headed stable-boy standing over them to do with low bows the honours of the house.

The room into which they were shown, though no whit

cleaner than the rest, had a comfortable fire upon the grate, and a plentiful meal of cold meat and steaming potatoes boiled in their jackets laid on the table. Jerry put down the bags here, and disappeared before the O'Mahony could speak. The O'Mahony promptly sent the waiter after him, and upon his return spoke with some sharpness :

'Jerry, don't give me any more of this !' he said. 'You can chore it around, and make yourself useful to me, as you've always done ; but you git your meals with me, d'ye hear ? Right alongside of me every time !'

Thus the table was laid for three, and The O'Mahony made his companions acquainted with each other.

'This is Jerry Higgins,' he explained to the wondering swart-visaged little man. 'He's sort o' chief cook and bottle-washer to the establishment, but he's so bashful afore strangers, I have to talk sharp to him now an' then. And let's see—I don't think the lawyer told me your name.'

'I am Cormac O'Daly,' said the other, bowing with proud humility. 'An O'Mahony has had an O'Daly to chronicle his deeds of valour and daring, to sing his praises of person and prowess, since ages before Kian fought at Clontarf and married the daughter of the great Brian Boru. Oppression and poverty, sir, have diminished the position of the bard in most parts of Ireland, I'm informed. All the O'Dalys that in former times were bards to The O'Neill in Ulster, The O'Reilly of Brefny, The MacCarthy in Desmond and The O'Farrell of Annaly—faith, they've disappeared from the face of the earth. But in Muirisc—glory be to the Lord !—there's still an O'Daly to welcome The O'Mahony back and sing the celebration of his achievements.'

'Sort o' song-and-dance man, then, eh ?' said The O'Mahony. 'Well, after dinner we'll push the table back an' give you a show. But let's eat first.'

The little man for the moment turned upon the speaker a glance of surprise, which seemed to have in it the elements of pain. Then he spoke, as if reassured :

'Ah, sir, in America, where I'm told the Irish are once more a rich and powerful people, our ancient nobility would have their bards, with rale harps and voices for singing. But in this poor country it's only a mettyphorical existence a bard can have. Whin I spoke the word "song," my intintion was allegorical. Sure, 'tis drivin' you from the house I'd be after doing, were I to sing in the genuine maning of the word. But I have here some small verses which I composed this day, while I was waitin' in the pig-market, that you might not be indisposed to listen to, and to accept.'

O'Daly drew from his waistcoat-pocket a sheet of soiled and crumpled paper forthwith, on which some lines had been scrawled in pencil. Smoothing this out upon the table, he donned a pair of big, horn-rimmed spectacles, and proceeded to decipher and slowly read out the following, the while the others ate and, marvelling much, listened :

I.

'What do the gulls scream as they wheel
Along Dunmanus' broken shore?
What do the west winds, keening shrill,
Call to each other for evermore?
From Muirisc's reeds, from Goleen's weeds,
From Gabriel's summit, Skull's low lawn,
The echoes answer, through their tears,
"O'Mahony's gone! O'Mahony's gone!"

II.

'But now the sunburst brightens all,
The clouds are lifted, waters gleam,
Long pain forgotten, glad tears fall,
At waking from this evil dream.
The cawing rooks, the singing brooks,
The zephyr's sighs, the bee's soft hum,
All tell the tale of our delight—
"O'Mahony's come! O'Mahony's come!"

III.

'O'Mahony of the white-foamed coast,
 Of Kinalmeaky's nut-brown plains,
 Lord of Rosbrin, proud Raithlean's boast,
 Who over the waves and the sea-mist reigns.
 Let Cassidy quake ! O'Driscoll shake !
 The O'Casey hide his head in fear !
 While Saxons flee across the sea—
 "O'Mahony's here ! O'Mahony's here !" '

The bard finished his reading with a trembling voice, and looked at his auditors earnestly through moistened eyes. The excitement had brought a dim flush of colour upon his leathery cheeks where the blue-black line of close shaving ended.

'It's to be sung to the chune of "The West Awake !"' he said at last, with diffidence.

'You did that all with your own jack-knife, eh?' remarked The O'Mahony, nodding in approbation. 'Well, sir, it's darned good !'

'Then you're plased with it, sir?' asked the poet.

'"Pleased !" Why, man, if I'd known they felt that way about it, I'd have come years ago. "Pleased?" Why, it's downright po'try.'

'Ah, that it is, sir,' put in Jerry sympathetically. 'And to think of it that he did it all in the pig-market whiles he waited for us ! Egor ! 'twould take me the best part of a week to conthrive as much !'

O'Daly glanced at him with severity.

'Maybe more yet,' he said tersely, and resumed his long-interrupted meal.

'And you're goin' to be around all the while, eh, ready to turn these poems out on short notice?' The O'Mahony asked.

'Sir, an O'Daly's poor talents are day and night at the command of The O'Mahony of Muirisc,' the bard replied.

Then, scanning Jerry, he put a question: 'Is Mr. Higgins long with you, sir?'

'Oh, yes; a long while,' answered The O'Mahony, without a moment's hesitation. 'Yes—I wouldn't know how to get along without him—he's been one of the family so long, now.'

The near-sighted poet failed to observe the wink which was exchanged across the table.

'The name Higgins,' he remarked, 'is properly MacEgan. It is a very honourable name. They were hereditary Brehons or judges, in both Desmond and Ormond, and, later, in Connaught, too. The name is also called O'Higgins and O'Hagan. If you would permit me to suggest, sir,' he went on, 'it would be better at Muirisc if Mr. Higgins were to resume his ancestral appellation, and consent to be known as MacEgan. The children there are that well grounded in Irish history, the name would secure for him additional respect in their eyes. And moreover, sir, saving Mr. Higgins's feelings, I observed that you call him "Jerry." Now "Jerry" is appropriate when among intimate friends or relations, or bechune master and man—and its more ceremonious form, Jeremiah, is greatly used in the less educated parts of this county. But, sir, Jeremiah is, strictly speaking, no name for an Irishman at all, but only the cognomen of a Hebrew bard who followed the Israelites into captivity, like Owen Ward did the O'Neils into exile. It's a base and vulgar invention of the Saxons—this new Irish Jeremiah—for why? Because their black thick tongues cannot pronounce the beautiful old Irish name Diarmid or Dermot. Manny poor people, for want of understanding, forgets this now. But in Muirisc the laste intelligent child knows better. Therefore, I would suggest that when we arrive at your ancestral abode, sir, Mr. Higgins's name be given as Diarmid MacEgan.'

'An' a foine bould name it is, too !' said Jerry. 'Egor ! if I'm called that, and called rigular to me males as well, I'll put whole inches to my stature.'

'Well, O'Daly,' said The O'Mahony, 'you just run that part of the show to suit yourself. If you hear of anything that wants changin' any time, or whittlin' down or bein' spelt different, you can interfere right then an' there without sayin' anything to me. What I want is to have things done correct, even if we're out o' pocket by it. You're the agent of the estate, ain't you?'

'I am that, sir; and likewise the postmaster, the physician, the preceptor, the tax-collector, the clerk of the parish, the poor law guardian, and the attorney; not to mintion the proud hereditary post to which I've already adverted, that of bard and historian to The O'Mahony. But, sir, I see that your family carriage is at the dure. We'll be startin' now, if it's your pleazure. It's a long journey we've before us.'

When the bill had been called for and paid by O'Daly, and they had reached the street, The O'Mahony surveyed with a lively interest the strange vehicle drawn up at the curb before him. In principle it was like the outside cars he had yesterday seen for the first time, but much lower, narrower and longer. The seats upon which occupants were expected to place themselves back to back, were close together, and cushioned only with worn old pieces of cow-skin. Between the shafts was a shaggy and unkempt little beast, which was engaged in showing its teeth viciously at the children and the dog. The whole equipage looked a century old at the least.

At the end of four hours the rough-coated pony was still scurrying along the stony road at a rattling pace. It had galloped up the hills and raced down into the valleys with no break of speed from the beginning. The O'Mahony,

grown accustomed now to maintaining his seat, thought he had never seen such a horse before, and said so to O'Daly, who sat beside him, Jerry and the bags being disposed on the opposite side, and the driver, a silent, round-shouldered, undersized young man, sitting in front with his feet on the shafts.

'Ah, sir, our bastes are like our people hereabouts,' replied the bard; 'not much to look at, but with hearts of goold. They'll run till they fall. But, sir—halt, now, Malachy!—yonder you can see Muirisc.'

The jaunting-car stopped. The April twilight was gathering in the clear sky above them, and shadows were rising from the brown bases of the mountains to their right. The whole journey had been through a bleak and desolate moor and bog land, broken here and there by a lonely glen, in the shelter of which a score of stone hovels were clustered, and to which all attempts at tillage were confined.

Now, as The O'Mahony looked, he saw stretched before him, some hundred feet below, a great level plain, from which, in the distance, a solitary mountain ridge rose abruptly. This plain was wedge-shaped, and its outlines were sharply defined by the glow of evening light upon the waters surrounding it—waters which dashed in white breakers against the rocky coast nearest by, but seemed to lie in placid quiescence on the remote farther shore.

It was toward this latter dark line of coast, half-obscured now as they gazed by rising sea-mists, that O'Daly pointed; and The O'Mahony, scanning the broad, dusky landscape, made out at last some flickering sparks of reddish light close to where the water met the land.

'See, O'Mahony, see!' the little man cried, his claw-like hand trembling as he pointed. 'Those lights burned there for Kian when he never returned from Clontarf eight hundred years ago; they are burning there now for you!'

CHAPTER VII.

THE O'MAHONY'S HOME-WELCOME.

THE road from the brow of the hill down to the plain wound in such devious courses through rock-lined defiles and bog-paths shrouded with stunted tangles of scrub-trees, that an hour elapsed before The O'Mahony again saw the fires which had been lighted to greet his return. This hour's drive went in silence, for the way was too rough for talk. Darkness fell, and then the full moon rose and wrapped the wild landscape in strange, misty lights and weird shadows.

All at once the car emerged from the obscurity of overhanging trees and boulders, and the travellers found themselves in the very heart of the hamlet of Muirisc. The road they had been traversing seemed to have come suddenly to an end in a great barn-yard, in the centre of which a bonfire was blazing, and around which, in the reddish flickering half-lights, a lot of curiously-shaped stone buildings, little and big, old and new, were jumbled in sprawling picturesqueness.

About the 'fire a considerable crowd of persons were gathered—thin little men in long coats and knee-breeches ; old, white-capped women with large, black-hooded cloaks ; younger women with crimson petticoats and bare feet and

ankles, children of all sizes and ages clustering about their skirts—perhaps a hundred souls in all. Though The O'Mahony had very little poetic imagination or pictorial sensibility, he was conscious that the spectacle was a curious one.

As the car came to a stop, O'Daly leaped lightly to the ground, and ran over to the throng by the bonfire.

'Now thin!' he called out, with vehemence; 'have yez swallowed yer tongues? Follow me now! Cheers for The O'Mahony! Now thin! One—two——'

The little man waved his arms, and at the signal, led by his piping voice, the assembled villagers sent up a concerted shout, which filled the shadowed rookeries round about with rival echoes of 'hurrahs' and 'hurroos,' and then broke, like an exploding rocket, into a shower of high-pitched, unintelligible ejaculations.

Amidst this welcoming chorus of remarks, which he could not understand, The O'Mahony alighted, and walked toward the fire, closely followed by Jerry, and by Malachy, the driver, bearing the bags.

For a moment he almost feared to be overthrown by the spontaneous rush which the black-cloaked old women made upon him, clutching at his arms and shoulders and deafening his ears with a babel of outlandish sounds. But O'Daly came instantly to his rescue, pushing back the eager crones with vigorous roughness, and scolding them in two languages in sharp peremptory tones.

'Back there wid ye, Biddy Quinn! Now thin, ould deludherer, will ye hould yer pace! Come along out o' that, Pether's Mag! Lave his honor a free path, will'ye!'

Thus with stern remonstrance, backed by cuffs and pushes, O'Daly cleared the way, and The O'Mahony found himself half-forced, half-guided away from the fire and toward a tall and sculptured archway, which stood alone,

while independent of any adjoining wall, upon the nearest edge of what he took to be the barnyard.

Passing under this impressive mediæval gateway, he confronted a strange pile of buildings, gray and hoar in the moonlight where their surface was not covered thick with ivy. There were high pinnacles thrusting their jagged points into the sky line, which might be either chimneys or watch-towers; there were lofty gabled walls, from which the roofs had fallen; there were arched window-holes, through which vines twisted their umbrageous growth unmolested; and side by side with these signs of bygone ruin there were puzzling tokens of present occupation.

A stout, elderly woman, in the white, frilled cap of her district, with a shawl about her shoulders and a bright-red skirt, stood upon the steps of what seemed the doorway of a church, bowing to the new-comer. Behind her in the hall glowed the light of a hospitable, homelike fire.

'It is his honour come back to his own, Mrs. Sullivan,' the stranger heard O'Daly's voice call out.

'And it's kindly welcome ye are, sir,' said the woman, bowing again. 'Yer honour doesn't remimber me, perhaps. I was Nora O'Mara, thin, in the days whin ye were a wee bit of a lad, before your father and mother—God rest their sows!—crossed the say!'

'I'm afraid I don't jest place you,' said The O'Mahony. 'I'm the worst hand in the world at rememberin' faces.'

The woman smiled.

'*Molare!* It's not be me face that anny boy of thirty years back 'ud recognise me now,' she said, as she led the way for the party into the house. 'There were thim that had a dale of soft-sawderin' words to spake about it thin; but they've left off this manny years ago.'

'It's your cooking and your fine housekeeping that we do be praising now with every breath, Mrs. Sullivan; and

sure that's far more complimentary to you than mere eulogiums on skin-deep beauty, that's here to-day and gone to-morrow, and that was none o' your choosing at best,' said O'Daly, as they entered the room at the end of the passage.

'Thru for you, Cormac O'Daly,' the housekeeper responded, with twinkling eyes; 'and I'm thinkin', if we'd all of us the choosin' of new faces, what an altered appearance you'd presint, without delay.'

A bright glowing bank of peat on the hearth filled the room with cozy comfort.

It was a small, square chamber, roofed with blackened oak beams, and having arched doors and windows. Its walls, partly of stone, partly of plaster roughly scratched, were whitewashed. The sanded floor was bare, save for a cowskin mat spread before the fire. A high, black-wood sideboard at one end of the room, a half-dozen stiff-backed, uncompromising looking chairs, and a table in the centre, heaped with food, but without a cloth, completed the inventory of visible furniture.

Mrs. Sullivan bustled out of the room, leaving the men together. The O'Mahony sent a final inquisitive glance from ceiling to uncarpeted floor.

'So this is my ranch, eh?' he said, taking off his hat.

'Sir, you're welcome to the ancestrhal abode of the O'Mahonys of Muirisc,' answered O'Daly gravely. 'The room we stand in often enough sheltered stout Conagher O'Mahony, before confiscation dhrove him forth, and the ruffian Boyle came in. 'Tis far oldher, sir, than Bally-desmond or even Dunmanus.'

'So old, the paper seems to have all come off'm the walls,' said The O'Mahony. 'Well, we'll git in a rocking-chair or so and a rag-carpet and new paper, an' spruce her up generally. I s'pose there's lots o' more room in the house?'

'Well, sir, rightly spakin', there is a dale more, but it's mostly not used, by rayson of there being no roof overhead. There's this part of the castle that's inhabitable, and there's a part of the convent forninst the porch where the nuns live, but there's more of both, not to mintion the church, that's ruined entirely. Whatever your taste in ruins may plase to be, there'll be something here to delight you. We have thim that's a thousand years old, and thim that's fallen into disuse since only last winter. Anny kind you like: Early Irish, pray-Norman, posht-Norman, Elizabethan, Georgian, or very late Victorian—here the ruins are for you, the natest and most complate and convanient altogether to be found in Munster.'

The eyes of the antiquarian bard sparkled with enthusiasm as he recounted the architectural glories of Muirisc. There was no answering glow in the glance of The O'Mahony.

'I'll have a look round first thing in the morning,' he said, after the men had seated themselves at the table.

A bright-faced, neatly clad girl divided with Mrs. Sullivan the task of bringing the supper from the kitchen beyond into the room; but it was Malachy, wearing now a curiously shapeless long black coat, instead of his driver's jacket, who placed the dishes on the table, and for the rest stood in silence behind his new master's chair.

The O'Mahony grew speedily restless under the consciousness of Malachy's presence close at his back.

'We can git along without him, can't we?' he asked O'Daly, with a curt backward nod.

'Ah, no, sir,' pleaded the other. 'The boy 'ud be heart-broken if ye sint him away. 'Twas his grandfather waited on your great-uncle's cousin, The O'Mahony of the Double Teeth; and his father always served your cousins four times removed, who aich in his turn held the title; and the old man sorrowed himsilf to death whin the last of 'em desaysed,

and your honour couldn't be found, and there was no more an O'Mahony to wait upon. The grief of that good man wud 'a' brought tears to your eyes. There was no keeping him from the dhrink day or night, sir, till he made an ind to himsilf. And young Malachy, sir, he's composed of the same determined matarial.'

'Well, of course, if he's so much sot on it as all that,' said The O'Mahony, relenting. 'But I wanted to feel free to talk over affairs with you—money matters and so on ; and——'

'Ah, sir, no fear about Malachy. Not a word of what we do be saying does he comprehend.'

'Deef and dumb, eh?'

'Not at all ; but he has only the Irish.' In answer to O'Mahony's puzzled look, O'Daly added in explanation: 'It's the glory of Muirisc, sir, that we hould fast be our ancient thraditions and tongue. In all the place there's not rising a dozen that could spake to you in English. And—I suppose your honour forgets the Irish entoirely? Or perhaps your parents neglected to tache it to you?'

'Yes,' said The O'Mahony ; 'they never taught me any Irish at all ; leastways, not that I remember.'

'Luk at that now!' exclaimed O'Daly sadly, as he took more fish upon his plate.

'It's goin' to be pritty rough sleddin' for me to git around if nobody understands what I say, ain't it?' asked The O'Mahony doubtfully.

'Oh, not at all,' O'Daly made brisk reply. 'It's part of my hereditary duty to accompany you on all your travels and explorations and incursions, to keep a record of the same, and properly celebrate thim in song and history. The last two O'Mahonys, betwixt ourselves, did nothing but dhrink at the pig-market at Dunmanway once a week, and dhrink at Mike Leary's shebeen over at Ballydivlin the

remaining days of the week, and dhrink here at home on Sundays. To say the laste, this provided only indifferent opportunities for a bard. But, plase the Lord, better times have come now.'

Malachy had cleared the dishes from the board, and now brought forward a big square decanter, a sugar bowl, a lemon fresh cut in slices, three large glasses and one small one. O'Daly at this lifted a steaming copper kettle from the crane over the fire, and began in a formally ceremonious and deliberate manner the brewing of the punch. The O'Mahony watched the operation with vigilance. Then clay pipes and tobacco were produced, and Malachy left the room.

'What I wanted to ask about,' said The O'Mahony, after a pause, and between sips from his fragrant glass, 'was this: That lawyer, Carmody, didn't seem to know much about what the estate was worth, or how the money came in, or anything else. All he had to do, he said, was to snoop around and find out where I was. All the rest was in your hands. What I want to know is jest where I stand.'

'Well, sir, that's not hard to demonsthrate. You're The O'Mahony of Muirisc. You own in freehold the best part of this barony—some nine thousand acres. You have eight-and-thirty tinants by lasehold, at a total rintal of close upon four hundred pounds; turbary rights bring in rising twinty pounds; the royalty on the carrigeens brings ten pounds; your own farms, with the pigs, the barley, the grazing and the butter, produce annually two hundred pounds—a total of six hundred and thirty pounds, if I'm not mistaken.'

'How much is that in dollars?'

'About three thousand one hundred and fifty dollars, sir.'

'And that comes in each year?' said The O'Mahony, straightening himself in his chair,

'It does that,' said O'Daly; then, after a pause, he added dryly: 'and goes out again.'

'How d'ye mean?'

'Sir, the O'Mahonys are a proud and high-minded race, and must live accordingly. And aich of your ancestors, to keep up his dignity, borrowed as much money on the blessed land as ever he could raise, till the inthrest now ates up the greater half of the income. If you net two hundred pounds a year—that is to say, one thousand dollars—you're doing very well indeed. In the mornin' I'll be happy to show you all me books and the accounts bechune the estate and Mrs. Fergus O'Mahony.'

'Who's she?'

'The sister of the last of the O'Mahonys before you, sir, who married another of the name only distantly related, and has been a widow these five years, and would be owner of the estate if her brother had broken the entail as he always intinded, and never did by rayson that there was so much dhrinking and sleeping and playing "forty-five" at Mike Leary's to be done, he'd no time for lawyers. Mrs. Fergus has been having the use of the property since his death, sir, being the nearest visible heir.'

'And so my comin' threw her out, eh? Did she take it pritty hard?'

'Sir, loyalty to The O'Mahony is so imbedded in the breast of every sowl in Muirisc, that if she'd made a sign to resist your pretinsions, her own frinds would have hooted her. She may have some riservations deep down in her heart, but she's too thrue a O'Mahony to revale thim.'

More punch was mixed, and The O'Mahony was about to ask further questions concerning the widow he had dispossessed, when the door opened and a novel procession entered the room.

Three venerable women, all of about the same height,

and all clad in a strange costume of black gowns and sweeping black veils, their foreheads and chins covered with stiff bands of white linen, and long chains of beads ending in a big silver-gilt cross swinging from their girdles, advanced in single file toward the table—then halted, and bowed slightly.

O'Daly and Jerry had risen to their feet upon the instant of this curious apparition, but The O'Mahony kept his seat, and nodded with amiability.

'How d' do?' he said lightly. 'It's mighty neighbourly of you to run in like this, without knockin', or standin' on ceremony. Won't you sit down, ladies? I guess you can find chairs.'

'These are the Ladies of the Hostage's Tears, your honour,' O'Daly hastened to explain, at the same time energetically winking and motioning to him to stand.

But The O'Mahony did not budge.

'I'm glad to see you,' he assured the nuns once more. 'Take a seat, won't you? O'Daly here'll mix you up one o' these drinks o' his'n, I'm sure, if you'll give the word.'

'We thank you, O'Mahony,' said the foremost of the aged women in a deep, solemn voice, but paying no heed to the chairs which O'Daly and Jerry had dragged forward. 'We come solely to do obeisance to you as the heir and successor of our pious founder, Diarmid of the Fine Steeds, and to presint to you your kinswoman—our present pupil, and the solitary hope of our once renowned order.'

The O'Mahony gathered nothing of her meaning from this lugubrious wail of words, and glanced over the speaker's equally aged companions in vain for any sign of hopefulness, solitary or otherwise. Then he saw that the hindmost of the nuns had produced, as if from the huge folds of her black gown, a little girl of six or seven, clad in the same gloomy tint, whom she was pushing forward.



'KATE O'MAHONY, SIR,' SHE SAID.



The child advanced timidly under pressure, gazing wonderingly at The O'Mahony, out of big, heavily-fringed hazel eyes. Her pale face was made quite chalk-like by contrast with a thick tangle of black hair, and wore an expression of apprehensive shyness almost painful to behold.

The O'Mahony stretched out his hands and smiled, but the child hung back, and looked not in the least reassured. He asked her her name with an effort at joviality.

'Kate O'Mahony, sir,' she said in a low voice, bending her little knees in a formal bob of courtesy.

'And are you goin' to rig yourself out in those long gowns and veils, too, when you grow up, eh, Siss?' he asked.

'The daughters of the O'Mahonys of Muirisc, with only here and there a thriffling exception, have been Ladies of the Hostage's Tears since the order was founded here in the year of our Lord 1191,' said the foremost nun stiffly. 'After long years, in which it seemed as if the order must perish, our prayers were answered, and this child of the O'Mahony's was sent to us to continue the vows and obligations of the convent, and restore it, if it be the saints' will, to its former glory.'

'Middlin' big job they've cut out for you, eh, Siss?' commented the O'Mahony smilingly.

The pleasant twinkle in his eye seemed to attract the child. Her face lost something of its scared look, and she of her own volition moved a step nearer to his outstretched hands. Then he caught her up and seated her on his knee.

'So you're goin' to sail in, eh, an' jest make the old convent hum again? Strikes me that's a pritty chilly kind o' look-out for a little gal like you. Wouldn't you now, honest Injun, rather be whoopin' round barefoot, with a nanny-goat, say, an' some rag dolls, an'—an'—climbin' trees an' huntin'

after eggs in the hay-mow—than go into partnership with grandma, here, in the nun business?’

The O'Mahony had trotted the child gently up and down the while he propounded his query. Perhaps it was its obscure phraseology which prompted her to hang her head, and obstinately refuse to lift it even when he playfully put his finger under her chin. She continued to gaze in silence at the floor; but if the nuns could have seen her face they would have noted that presently its expression lightened and its big eyes flashed as The O'Mahony whispered something into her ear. The good women would have been shocked indeed could they also have heard that something.

‘Now don't you fret your gizzard, Siss,’ he had whispered—‘you needn't be a nun for one solitary darned minute if you don't want to be.’

CHAPTER VIII.

JERRY'S REVELATION.

A FISHING-BOAT lay at anchor in a cove of Dunmanus Bay, a hundred rods from shore, softly rising and sinking with the swell of the tide which stirred the blue waters with all gentleness on this peaceful June morning. Two men sat in lounging attitudes at opposite ends of the little craft, yawning lazily in the sunshine. They held lines in their hands, but their listless and wandering glances made it evident that nothing was further from their thoughts than the catching of fish.

The warm summer air was so clear that the hamlet of Muirisc, whose gray walls embroidered with glossy vines, and tiny cottages white with lime-wash, were crowded together on the very edge of the shore, seemed close beside them, and every grunt and squawk from sty or barn-yard came over the lapping waters to them as from a sounding-board. The village, engirdled by steep, sheltering cliffs, and glistening in the sunlight, made a picture which artists would have blessed their stars for. The two men in the boat looked at it wearily.

'Egor, it's my belafe,' said the fisher at the bow, after what seemed an age of idle silence, 'that the fishes have all follied the byes an' gerrels, an' betaken thimselves to

Ameriky.' He pulled in his line, and gazed with disgust at the intact bait. 'Luk at that, now!' he continued. 'There's a male fit for the holy Salmon of Knowledge himsilf, that taught Fin MacCool the spache of animals, and divil a bite has the manest shiner condiscinded to make at it.'

'Oh, darn the fish!' replied the other, with a long sigh. 'I don't care whether we catch any or not. It's worth while to come out here, even if we never got a nibble and baked ourselves into bricks, jest to get rid of that infernal O'Daly.'

It was The O'Mahony who spoke, and he invested the concluding portion of his remark with an almost tearful earnestness. During the pause which ensued he chewed vigorously upon the tobacco in his mouth, and spat into the sea with a stern expression of countenance.

'I tell you what, Jerry,' he broke out with at last—'I can't stand much more of that fellow. He's jest breakin' me up piecemeal. I begin to feel like Jeff Davis—that it 'ud have been ten dollars in my pocket if I'd never been born.'

'Ah, sure, your honour,' said Jerry, 'ye'll git used to it in time. He manes for the best.'

'That's jest what makes me tired,' rejoined The O'Mahony; 'that's what they always say about a fellow when he makes a confounded nuisance of himself. I hate fellows that mean for the best. I'd much rather he meant as bad as he knew how. P'raps then he'd shut up and mind his own business, and leave me alone part of the time. It's bad enough to have your estate mortgaged up to the eye-brows, but to have a bard piled on top o' the mortgages—Igad, it's more'n flesh and blood can stand! I don't wonder them other O'Mahony's took to drink.'

'There's a dale to be said for the dhrink, your honour,' commented the other tentatively.

'There can be as much *said* as you like,' said The O'Mahony, with firmness, 'but *doin'* is a hoss of another colour. I'm goin' to stick to the four drinks a day an' two at night; an' what's good enough for me's good enough for you. That bat of ours the first week we come settled the thing. I said to myself: "There's goin' to be one O'Mahony that dies sober, or I'll know the reason why!"'

'Egor! Saint Pether won't recognise ye, thin,' chuckled Jerry; and the other grinned grimly in spite of himself.

'Do you know, I've bin fig'rin' to myself on that convent business,' The O'Mahony mused aloud after a time, 'an' I guess I've pritty well sized it up. The O'Mahonys started that thing, accordin' to my notion, jest to coop up their sisters in, where board and lodgin' 'ud come cheap, an' one suit o' clothes 'd last a lifetime, in order to leave more money for themselves for whisky. I ain't sayin' the scheme ain't got some points about it. You bar out all that nonsense about bonnets an' silk dresses an' beads an' fixin's, right from the word go, and you've got 'em safe under lock an' key, so 't they can't go gallivantin' round an' gittin' into scrapes. But I'll be dodrotted if I'm goin' to set still an' see 'em rope in that little gal Katie agin her will. You hear *me*! An' another thing, I'm goin' to put my foot down about goin' to church every mornin'. Once a week's goin' to be my ticket right from now. An' you needn't show up any oftener yourself if you don't want to. It's high time we had it out whether it's me or O'Daly that's runnin' this show.'

'Sure, rightly spakin', your honor's own sowl wouldn't want no more than a Mass aich Sunday,' expounded Jerry, concentrating his thoughts upon the whole vast problem of dogmatic theology. 'But this is the throuble of it, you see, sur: there's the sowls of all thim other O'Mahonys

that's gone before, that the nuns do be prayin' for to git out of purgatory, an'——'

'That's all right,' broke in The O'Mahony, 'but my motto is—let every fellow hustle for himself. They're on the spot, wherever it is, an' they're the best judges of what they want; an' if they ain't got sand enough to sail in an' git it, I don't see why I should be routed up out of bed every mornin' at seven o'clock to help 'em. To tell the truth, Jerry, I'm gittin' all-fired sick of these O'Mahonys. This havin' dead men slung at you from mornin' to night, day in an' day out, rain or shine, would have busted up Job himself.'

'I'm thinking, sir,' said Jerry, with a merry twinkle in his eyes, 'there's no havin' annything in this worruld without payin' for that same. 'Tis the pinalty of belongin' to a great family. Egor! since O'Daly thranslated me into a MacEgan I've had no pace of me life, by rayson of the necessity to behave mesilf accordin'.'

'Why, darn it all, man,' pursued the other, 'I can't do a solitary thing, any time of day, without O'Daly luggin' up what some old rooster did a thousand years ago. He follows me round like my shadow, blatherin' about what Dermid of the Bucking Horses did, an' what Conn of the Army Mules thought of doin' and didn't, and what Fin of the Wall-eyed Pikes would have done if he could, till I git sick at my stomach. He won't let me lift my finger to do anything, because The O'Mahony mustn't sile his hands with work, and I have to stand round and watch a lot of bungling cusses pretend to do it, when they don't know any more about the work than a yellow dog.'

'Faith, ye'll not get much sympathy from the gentry of Ireland on *that* score,' said Jerry.

'An' then that Malachy—he gives me a cramp! he ain't got a grin in his whole carcase, an' he can't understand a

word that I say, so that O'Daly has that for another excuse to hang around all the while. Take my steer, Jerry; if anybody leaves you an estate, you jest inquire if there's a bard and a hereditary dumb waiter that go with it; an' if there is, you jest sashay off somewhere else.'

'Ah, sir, but an estate's a great thing.'

'Yes—to tell about. But now jest look at the thing as she stands. I'm The O'Mahony an' all that, an' I own more land than you can shake a stick at; but what does it all come to? Why, when the int'rest is paid, I am left so poor that if churches was sellin' at two cents apiece I couldn't buy the hinge on a contribution box. An' then it's downright mortifyin' to me to have to git a livin' by takin' things away from these poverty-stricken devils here. I'm ashamed to look 'em in the face, knowin' as I do how O'Daly makes 'em whack up pigs, an' geese, an' chickens, an' vegetables, an' fish, not to mention all the money they can scrape together, just to keep me in idleness. It ain't fair. Every time one of 'em comes in, to bring me a peck o' peas, or a pail o' butter, or a shillin' that he's managed to earn somewhere, I say to myself: "Ole hoss, if you was that fellow, and he was loafin' round as The O'Mahony, you'd jest lay for him and kick the whole top of his head off, and serve him darned well right, too."'

Jerry looked at his master now with a prolonged and serious scrutiny, greatly differing from his customary quizzical glance.

'Throo for your honour,' he said at last, in a hesitating way, as if his remark disclosed only half his thought.

'Yes, sirree, I'm sourin' fast on the hull thing,' The O'Mahony exclaimed. 'To do nothin' all day long but to listen to O'Daly's yarns, an' make signs at Malachy, an' think how long it is between drinks—that ain't no sort o' life for a white man. Igad! if there was any fightin' goin'

on anywhere in the world, darn me if I would not pull up stakes an' light out for it. Another six months o' this, an' my blood 'll all be turned into butter-milk !'

The distant apparition of a sailing-vessel hung upon the outer horizon, the noon sun causing the white squares of canvas to glow like jewels upon the satin sheen of the sea. Jerry stole a swift glance at his companion, and then bent a long meditative gaze upon the passing vessel, humming softly to himself as he looked. At last he turned to his companion with an air of decision.

'O'Mahony,' he said, using the name thus for the first time, 'I'm resolved in me mind to disclose something to ye. It's a sacret I'm goin' to tell you.'

He spoke with impressive solemnity, and the other looked up with interest awakened.

'Go ahead,' he said.

'Well, sir, your remarks this day, and what I've seen wid me own eyes of your demaynor, makes it plain that you're a frind of Ireland. Now there's just wan way in the worruld for a frind of Ireland to demonsthrate his affection—and that's be enrollin' himsilf among thim that'll fight for her rights. Sir, I'll thrust ye wid me sacret. I'm a Fenian.'

The O'Mahony's attentive face showed no light of comprehension. The word which Jerry had uttered with such mystery conveyed no meaning to him at all at first; then he vaguely recalled it as a sort of slang description of Irishmen in general, akin to 'Mick' and 'bogtrotter.'

'Well, what of it?' he asked wonderingly.

Jerry's quick perception sounded at once the depth of his ignorance.

'The Fenians, sir,' he explained, 'are a great and sacret society, wid tins of thousands of min enlisted here, an' in Ameriky, an' among the Irish in England, wid intint to rise up as wan man whin the time comes, an' free Ireland. It's

a regular army, sir, that we're raisin', to conquer back our liberties, and dhrive the bloody Saxon foriver away from Erin's green shores.'

The O'Mahony let his puzzled gaze wander along the beetling coast-line of naked rocks.

'So far's I can see, they ain't green,' he said; 'they're black and drab. An' who's this fellow you call Saxon? I notice O'Daly lugs him into about every other piece o' po'try he nails me with, evenin's.'

'Sir, it's our term for the Englishman, who oppresses us, an' dhrives us to despair, an' prevints our holdin' our heads up amongst the nations of the earth. Sure, sir, wasn't all this counthry roundabout for a three days' journey belongin' to your ancesthors, till the English stole it and sold it to Boyle, that thief of the earth—and his tomb, be the same token, I've seen many a time at Youghal, where I was born. But—awh, sir, what's the use o' talkin'? Sure, the blood o' the O'Mahonys ought to stir in your veins at the mere suspicion of an opporchunity to sthrike a blow for your counthry.'

The O'Mahony yawned and stretched his long arms lazily in the sunshine.

'Nary a stir,' he said, with an idle half grin. 'But what the deuce is it you're drivin' at anyway?'

'Sir, I've towld ye we're raisin' an army—a great, thund'rin' sacret army—and whin it's raised an' our min all dhrilled an' our guns an' pikes all handy—sure, thin we'll rise and fight. An' it's much mistaken I am in you, O'Mahony, if you'd be contint to lave this fun go on undher your nose, an' you to have no hand in it.'

'Of course I want to be in it,' said The O'Mahony, evincing more interest. 'Only I couldn't make head or tail of what you was talkin' about. An' I don't know as I see yet jest what the scheme is. But you can count me in

on anything that's got gunpowder in it, an' that'll give me somethin' to do besides list'nin' to O'Daly's yawp.'

'We'll go to Cork to-morrow, thin, if it's convanient to you,' said Jerry eagerly. 'I'll spake to my "B," or captain, that is, an' inthroduce ye, through him, to the chief organizer of Munster, and sure, they'll make ye an' "A," the same as a colonel, and I'll get promotion undher ye—an' Egor! we'll raise a rigiment to oursilves entirely—an' Muirisc's the very darlin' of a place to land guns an' pikes an' powdher for all Ireland—an' 'tis we'll get the credit of it, an' get more promotion still, till, faith, there'll be nothin' too fine for our askin', an' we'll carry the whole blessed Irish republic around in our waistcoat-pocket. What the divil, man! We'll make ye presidint, an' I'll have a place in the poliss.'

'All right,' said The O'Mahony, 'we'll git all the fun there is out of it; but there's one thing, mind, that I'm jest dead set about.'

'Ye've only to name it, sir, and they'll be deloighted to plase ye.'

'Well, it's this: O'Daly's got to be ruled out o' the thing. I'm goin' to have one deal without any hereditary bard in it, or I don't play.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE VOICE OF THE HOSTAGE.

WE turn over now a score of those fateful pages on which Father Time keeps his monthly accounts with mankind, passing from sunlit June, with its hazy radiance lying softly upon smooth waters, to bleak and shrill February—the memorable February of 1867.

A gale had been blowing outside beyond the headlands all day, and by nightfall the minor waters of Dunmanus Bay had suffered such prolonged pulling and hauling and buffeting from their big Atlantic neighbours that they were up in full revolt, hurling themselves with thunderous roars of rage against the cliffs of their coast-line, and drenching the darkness with scattered spray. The little hamlet of Muirisc, which hung to its low, nestling nook under the rocks in the very teeth of this blast, shivered, soaked to the skin, and crossed itself prayerfully as the wind shrieked like a banshee about its roofless gables and tower-walls and tore at the thatches of its clustered cabins.

The three nuns of the Hostage's Tears, listening to the storm without, felt that it afforded an additional justification for the infraction of their rules which they were for this evening, by no means for the first time, permitting themselves. Religion itself rebelled against solitude on such a night.

Time had been when this convent, enlarged though it was by the piety of successive generations of early lords of Muirisc, still needed more room than it had to accommodate in comfort its host of inmates. But that time, alas! was now a musty tradition of bygone ages. Even before the great sectarian upheaval of the mid-Tudor period, the ancient family order of the Hostage's Tears had begun to decline. I can't pretend to give the reason. Perhaps the supply of the O'Mahonys' daughters fell off; possibly some obscure shift of fashion rendered marriage more attractive in their eyes. Only this I know, that when the Commissioners of Elizabeth, gleaning in the monastic stubble which the scythe of Henry had laid bare, came upon the nuns at Muirisc, whom the first sweep of the blade had missed, they found them no longer so numerous as they once had been. Ever since then the order had dwindled visibly. The three remaining ladies had, in their own extended cloistral career, seen the last habitable section of the convent fall into disuse and decay, until now only their own gaunt, stone-walled trio of cells, the school-room, the tiny chapel, and a chamber still known by the dignified title of the 'reception hall,' were available for use.

Here it was that a great mound of peat sparkled and glowed on the hearth, under a capricious draught which now sucked upward with a whistling swoop whole clods of blazing turf—now, by a contradictory freak, half-filled the room with choking bog-smoke. Still, even when eyes were tingling and nostrils aflame, it was better to be here than outside, and better to have company than be alone.

Both propositions were shiningly clear to the mind of Cormac O'Daly, as he mixed a second round of punch, and, peering through the steam from his glass at the audience gathered by the hearth, began talking again. The three aged nuns, who had heard him talk ever since he was

born, sat decorously together on a bench and watched him, and listened as attentively as if his presence were a complete novelty. Their chaplain, a snuffy, half-palsied little old man, Father Harrington to wit, dozed and blinked and coughed at the smoke in his chair by the fire as harmlessly as a house-cat on the rug. Mrs. Fergus O'Mahony, a plump and buxom widow in the late twenties, with a comely, stupid face, framed in little waves of black, crimped hair pasted flat to the skin, sat opposite the priest, glass in hand. Whenever the temptation to yawn became too strong, she repressed it by sipping at the punch.

'Anny student of the ancient Irish, or I might say Milesian charachter,' said O'Daly, with high, disputatious voice, 'might discern in our present chief a remarkable proof of what the learned call a reversion of toypes. It's thrue what you say, Mother Agnes, that he's unlike and teetotally different from anny other O'Mahony of our knowledge in modhern times. But thin I ask mesilf, what's the maning of this? Clearly, that he harks back on the ancestrhal tree, and resimbles some O'Mahony we *don't* know about! And this I've been to the labor of thracing out. Now attind to me! 'Tis in your riccords, that four ginerations afther your foundher, Diarmid of the Fine Steeds, there came an O'Mahony of Muirisc called Teige, a turbulent and timpistuous man, as his name in the chronicles, Teige *Gharbh*, would indicate. 'Tis well known that he viewed holy things with contimpt. 'Twas he that wint on to the very althar at Rosscarbery, in the chapel of St. Fachnan Mougah, or the hairy, and cudgeled wan of the daycons out of the place for the rayson that he stammered in his spache. 'Twas he that hung his bard, my ancesthor of that period, up by the heels on a willow-tree, merely because he fell asleep over his punch, afther dinner, and let the rival O'Dugan bard stale his new harp from him, and

lave a broken and disthressful old insthrumint in its place. Now, there's the rale ancesthor of *our* O'Mahony! 'Tis as plain as the nose on your face. And—now I remimber—sure 'twas this same divil of a Teige *Gharbh* who was possessed to marry his own cousin wance removed, who'd taken vows here in this blessed house. "Marry me now!" says he. "I'm wedded to the Lord!" says she. "Come along out o' that now!" says he. "Not a step!" says she. And thin, faith, what did the rebellious ruffian do but gather all the straws and weeds and wet turf round about, and pile 'em undernayth, and smoke the nuns out like a swarm o' bees. Sure, that's as like our O'Mahony now as two pays in a pod.'

As the little man finished, a shifty gust blew down the flue, and sent a darkling wave of smoke over the good people seated before the fire. They were too used to the sensation to do more than cough and rub their eyes. The mother-superior even smiled sternly through the smoke.

'Is your maning that O'Mahony is at present on the roof, striving to smoke us out?' she asked, with iron-clad sarcasm.

'Awh, get along wid ye, Mother Agnes,' wheezed the little priest, from his carboniferous corner. 'Who would he be afther demanding in marriage here?'

O'Daly and the nuns looked at their aged and shaky spiritual director with dulled apprehension. He spoke so rarely, and had a mind so far removed from the mere vanities and trickeries of decorative conversation, that his remark puzzled them. Then, as if through a single pair of eyes, they saw that Mrs. Fergus had straightened herself in her chair, and was simpering and preening her head weakly, like a conceited parrot.

The mother-superior spoke sharply.

'And do you flatther yoursilf, Mrs. Fergus O'Mahony

that the head of our house is blowing smoke down through the chimney for *you*?' she asked. 'Sure, if he was, thin, 'twould be a lamintable waste of breath. Wan puff from a short poipe would serve to captivate *you*!'

Cormac O'Daly made haste to bury his nose in his glass. Long acquaintance with the attitude of the convent toward the marital tendencies of Mrs. Fergus had taught him wisdom. It was safe to sympathize with either side of the long-standing dispute when the other side was unrepresented. But when the nuns and Mrs. Fergus discussed it together, he sagaciously held his peace.

'Is it sour grapes you're tasting, Agnes O'Mahony?' put in Mrs. Fergus briskly. In new matters, hers could not be described as an alert mind. But in this venerable quarrel she knew by heart every retort, innuendo and affront which could be used as weapons, and every weak point in the other's armour.

'Sour grapes! *me*!' exclaimed the mother-superior, with as lively an effect of indignation as if this rejoinder had not been flung in her face every month or so for the past dozen years. 'D'ye hearken to that, Sister Blanaid and Sister Maev! It's *me*, after me wan-and-fifty years of life in religion, that has this ojus imputation put on me! Whisht now! don't demane yoursilves by replyin'! We'll lave her to the condimnation of her own conscience.'

The two nuns had made no sign of breaking their silence before this admonition came, and they gazed now at the peat fire placidly. But the angered mother-superior ostentatiously took up her beads, and began whispering to herself, as if her thoughts were already millions of miles away from her antagonist with the crimped hair and the vacuous smile.

'It's persecuting me she's been these long years back,' Mrs. Fergus said to the company at large, but never taking

her eyes from the mother-superior's flushed face; 'and all because I married me poor desaysed husband, instead of taking me vows under her.'

'Ah, that poor desaysed husband!' Mother Agnes put in, with an ironical drawl in the words. 'Sure, when he was aloive, me ears were just worn out with listening to complaints about him! Ah, thin! 'Tis when we're dead that we're appreciated!'

'All because I married,' pursued Mrs. Fergus doggedly, 'and wouldn't come and lock mesilf up here, like a toad in the turf, and lave me brothers free to spind the money in riot and luxurious livin'. Maybe, if God's will had putt a squint on me, or given me shoulders a twist like Danny at the fair, or otherwise disfigured me faytures, I'd have been glad to take the vows. Mortial plainness is a great injuement to religion.'

The two nuns scuffled their feet on the stone floor and scowled at the fire. Mother Agnes put down her beads, and threw a martyr-like glance upward at the blackened oak roof.

'Praise be to the saints,' she said solemnly, 'that denied us the snare of mere beauty without sinse, or piety, or respect for old age, or humility, or politeness, or gratitude, or——'

'Very well, thin, Agnes O'Mahony!' broke in Mrs. Fergus promptly. 'If ye've that opinion of me, it's not becomin' that I should lave me daughter wid ye anny longer. I'll take her meself to Kenmare next week—the ride over the mountains will do me nervous system a power o' good—and *there* she'll learn to be a lady!'

Cormac O'Daly lifted his head and set down his glass. He knew perfectly well that with this familiar threat the dispute always came to an end. Indeed, all the parties to the recent contention now of their own accord looked at

him, and resettled themselves in their seats, as if to notify him that his turn had come round again.

'I'm far from denying,' he said, as if there had been no interruption at all, 'that our O'Mahony is possessed of qualities which commend him to the vulgar multitude. It's true that he rejoyced rents all over the estate, and made turbary rights and the carrigeens as free as water, and yet more than recouped himself by opening the copper mines beyond Ardmahon, and laying them to a company for a fine royalty. It's true he's the first O'Mahony for many a generation who's paid expenses, let alone putting money by in the bank.'

'And what more would ye ask?' said Mrs. Fergus. 'Sure, when he's done all this, and made fast friends with every man, woman and child round about into the bargain, what more would ye want?'

'Ah, what's money, Mrs. Fergus O'Mahony,' remonstrated O'Daly, 'and what's popularity with the mere thoughtless peasantry, if ye've no ancestral pride, no love and reverence for ancient family traditions, no devout desire to walk in the paths your forefathers trod?'

'Faith, them same forefathers trod them with a highly unsteady step, thin, bechune ourselves,' commented Mrs. Fergus.

'But their souls were filled with blessed piety,' said Mother Agnes gravely. 'If they gave small thought to the matter of money, and loike carnal distractions, they had open hands always for the needs of the Church, and of the convent here, and they made holy indings, every soul of 'em.'

'And they respected the hereditary functions of their bards,' put in O'Daly, with a conclusive air.

At the moment, as there came a sudden lull in the tumult of the storm outside, those within the reception-

room heard a distinct noise of knocking, which proceeded from beneath the stone-flags at their feet. Three blows were struck, with a deadened thud as upon wet wood, and then the astounded listeners heard a low, muffled sound, strangely like a human voice, from the same depths.

The tempest's furious screaming rose again without, even as they listened. All six crossed themselves mechanically, and gazed at one another with blanched faces.

'It is the Hostage!' whispered the mother-superior, glancing impressively around, and striving to dissemble the tremor which forced itself upon her lips. 'For wan-and-fifty years I've been waiting to hear the sound of him. My praydecessor, Mother Ellen, rest her sowl, heard him wance, and nixt day the roof of the church fell in. Be the same token, some new disasther is on fut for us, now.'

Cormac O'Daly was as frightened as the rest, but, as an antiquary, he could not combat the temptation to talk.

'Tis now just six hundred and seventy years,' he began, in a husky voice, 'since Diarmid of the Fine Steeds founded this convint, in expiation of his wrong to young Donal, Prince of Connaught. 'Twas the custom thin for the kings and great princes in Ireland to sind their sons as hostages to the palaces of their rivals, to live there as security, so to spake, for their fathers' good behaviour and peaceable intintions. 'Twas in this capacity that young Donal O'Connor came here, but Diarmid thrated him badly—not like his father's son at all—and immured him in a dungeon convanient in the rocks. His mother's milk was in the lad, and he wept for being parted from her till his tears filled the earth, and a living well sprung from thim the day he died. So then Diarmid repinted, and built a convint; and the well bubbled forth healing wathers so that all the people roundabout made pilgrimages to it, and with their offerings the O'Mahonys built new edifices till 'twas wan of the

grandest convints in Desmond ; and none but faymales of the O'Mahony blood saying prayers for the sowl of the Hostage.'

The nuns were busy with their beads, and even Mrs. Fergus bent her head. At last it was Mother Agnes who spoke, letting her rosary drop.

''Twas whin they allowed the holy well to be choked up and lost sight of among fallen stones that throuble first come to The O'Mahonys,' she said solemnly. ''Tis mesilf will beg The O'Mahony, on binded knees, to dig it open again. Worse luck, he's away to Cork or Waterford with his boat, and this storm 'll keep him from returning, till, perhaps, the final disasther falls on us and our house, and he still absinting himsilf. *Wirra!* What's that?'

The mother-superior had been forced to lift her voice, in concluding, to make it distinct above the hoarse roar of the elements outside. Even as she spoke, a loud crackling noise was heard, followed by a crash of masonry, which deafened the listeners' ears and shook the walls of the room they sat in.

With a despairing groan, the three nuns fell to their knees and bowed their veiled heads over their beads.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THE 'HEN HAWK' WAS BROUGHT IN.

THE good people of Muirisc had shut themselves up in their cabins, on this inclement evening of which I have spoken, almost before the twilight faded from the storm-wrapt outlines of the opposite coast. If any adventurous spirit of them all had braved the blast, and stood out on the cliff to see night fall in earnest upon the scene, perhaps between wild sweeps of drenching and blinding spray, he might have caught sight of a little vessel, with only its fore-sail set, plunging and labouring in the trough of the Atlantic outside. And if the spectacle had met his eyes, unquestionably his first instinct would have been to mutter a prayer for the souls of the doomed men upon this fated craft.

On board the *Hen Hawk* a good many prayers had already been said. The small coaster seemed, to its terrified crew, to have shrunk to the size of a walnut-shell, so wholly was it the plaything of the giant waters which heaved and tumbled about it, and shook the air with the riotous tumult of their sport. There were moments when the vessel hung poised and quivering upon the very ridge of a huge mountain of sea, like an Alpine climber who shudders to find himself balanced upon a crumbling foot

of rock between two awful depths of precipice ; then would come the breathless downward swoop into howling space and the fierce buffeting of ton-weight blows as the boat staggered blindly at the bottom of the abyss ; then again the helpless upward sweep, borne upon the shoulders of titan waves which reared their vast bulk into the sky, the dizzy trembling upon the summit, and the hideous plunge—a veritable nightmare of torture and despair.

Five men lay or knelt on deck, huddled about the mainmast, clinging to its hoops and ropes for safety. Now and again, when the vessel was lifted to the top of the green walls of water, they caught vague glimpses of the distant rocks, darkling through the night mists, which sheltered Muirisc, their home—and knew in their souls that they were never to reach that home alive. The time for praying was past. Drenched to the skin, choked with the salt spray, nearly frozen in the bitter winter cold, they clung numbly to their hold, and awaited the end.

One of them strove to gild the calamity with cheerfulness, by humming and groaning the air of a 'come-all-ye' ditty, the croon of which rose with quaint persistency after the crash of each engulfing wave had passed. The others were, perhaps, silently grateful to him—but they felt that if Jerry had been born a Muirisc man he could not have done it.

At the helm, soaked and gaunt as a water-rat, with his feet braced against the waist-rails, and the rudder-bar jammed under his arm and shoulder, was a sixth man—the master and owner of the *Hen Hawk*. The strain upon his physical strength, in thus by main force holding the tiller right, had for hours been unceasing—and one could see by his dripping face that he was deeply wearied. But sign of fear there was none.

Only a man brought up in the interior of a country, and who had come to the sea late in life, would have dared

bring this tiny cockle-shell of a coaster into such waters upon such a coast. The O'Mahony might himself have been frightened had he known enough about navigation to understand his present danger. As it was, all his weariness could not destroy the keen sense of pleasurable excitement he had in the tremendous experience. He forgot crew and cargo and vessel itself in the splendid zest of this mad fight with the sea and the storm. He clung to the tiller determinedly, bowing his head to the rush of the broken waves when they fell, and bending knees and body this way and that to answer the wild tossings and sidelong plungings of the craft—always with a light as of battle in his gray eyes. It was ever so much better than fighting with mere men.

The gloom of twilight ripened into pitchy darkness, broken only by momentary gleams of that strange, weird half-light which the rushing waves generate in their own crests of foam. The wind rose in violence when the night closed in, and the vessel's timbers creaked in added travail as huge seas lifted and hurled her onward through the black chaos toward the rocks. The men by the mast could every few minutes discern the red lights from the cottage windows of Muirisc, and shuddered anew as the glimmering sparks grew nearer.

Four of these five unhappy men were Muirisc born, and knew the sea as they knew their own mothers. The marvel was that they had not revolted against this wanton sacrifice of their lives to the whim or perverse obstinacy of an ignorant landsman, who a year ago had scarcely known a rudder from a jib-boom. They themselves dimly wondered at it now, as they strained their eyes for a glimpse of the fatal crags ahead. They had indeed ventured upon some mild remonstrance, earlier in the day, while it had still been possible to set the mainsail, and by long tacks turn

the vessel's course. But The O'Mahony had received their suggestion with such short temper and so stern a refusal, that there had been nothing more to be said—bound to him as Muirisc men to their chief, and as Fenians to their leader, as they were. And soon thereafter it became too late to do aught but scud almost bare-poled before the gale; and now there was nothing left but to die.

They could hear at last, above the shrill clamour of wind and rolling waves, the sullen roar of breakers smashing against the cliffs. They braced themselves for the great final crash, and muttered fragments of the Litany of the Saints between clenched teeth.

A prodigious sea grasped the vessel and lifted it to a towering height, where for an instant it hung trembling. Then with a leap it made a sickening dive down, down, till it was fairly engulfed in the whirling floods which caught it and swept wildly over its decks. A sinister thrill ran through the stout craft's timbers, and upon the instant came the harsh grinding sound of its keel against the rocks. The men shut their eyes.

A dreadful second—and lo! the *Hen Hawk*, shaking herself buoyantly like a fisher-fowl emerging after a plunge, floated upon gently rocking waters—with the hoarse tumult of storm and breakers comfortably behind her, and at her sides only the sighing-harp music of the wind in the sea-reeds.

'Hustle now, an' git out your anchor!' called out the cheerful voice of The O'Mahony, from the tiller.

The men scrambled from their knees as in a dream. They ran out the chain, reefed the foresail, and then made their way over the flush deck aft, slapping their arms for warmth, still only vaguely realizing that they were actually moored in safety inside the sheltered salt-water marsh, or *muirisc*, which gave their home its name.

This so-called swamp was at high tide, in truth, a very respectable inlet, which lay between the tongue of arable land on which the hamlet was built and the high jutting cliffs of the coast to the south. Its entrance, a stretch of water some forty yards in width, was over a bar of rock which at low tide could only be passed by row-boats. At its greatest daily depth, there was not much water to spare under the forty-five tons of the *Hen Hawk*. She had been steered now in utter darkness, with only the scattered and confusing lights of the houses to the left for guidance, unerringly upon the bar, and then literally lifted and tossed over it by the great rolling wall of breakers. She lay now tossing languidly on the choppy waters of the marsh, as if breathing hard after undue exertion—secure at last behind the cliffs.

The O'Mahony slapped *his* arms in turn, and looked about him. He was not in the least conscious of having performed a feat which any yachtsman in British waters would regard as incredible.

'Now, Jerry,' he said calmly, 'you git ashore and bring out the boat. You other fellows open the hatchway, an' be gittin' the things out. Be careful about your candle downstairs. You know why. It won't do to have a light up here on deck. Some of the women might happen to come out-doors an' see us.'

Without a word, the crew, even yet dazed at their miraculous escape, proceeded to carry out his orders. The O'Mahony bit from his plug a fresh mouthful of tobacco, and munched it meditatively, walking up and down the deck in the darkness, and listening to the high wind howling overhead.

The *Hen Hawk* had really been built at Barnstaple, a dozen years before, for the Devon fisheries, but she did not look unlike those unwieldy Dutch boats which curious

summer visitors watch with unfailing interest from the soft sands of Scheveningen. Her full-flushed deck had been an after-thought, dating back to the time when her activities were diverted from the fishing to the carrying industry. The O'Mahony had bought her at Cork, ostensibly for use in the lobster-canning enterprise which he had founded at Muirisc. Duck-breasted, squat and thick-lined, she looked the part to perfection.

The men were busy now getting out from the hold below a score of small kegs, each wrapped in oilskin swathings, and, after these, more than a score of long, narrow wooden cases, which, as they were passed up the little gangway from the glow of candlelight into the darkness, bore a gloomy resemblance to coffins. An hour passed before the empty boat returned from shore, having landed its finishing load, and the six men, stiff and chilled, clumsily swung themselves over the side of the vessel into it.

'Sure, it's a new layse of life I'm beginnin',' murmured one of them, Dominic by name, as he clambered out upon the stone landing-place. 'It's dead I was intoirely—an' resirriected agin, glory be to the Lord!'

'Sh-h! You shall have some whisky to make a fresh start on when we're through,' said The O'Mahony. 'Jerry, you run ahead an' open the side door. Don't make any noise. Mrs. Sullivan's got ears that can hear grass growin'. We'll follow on with the things.'

The carrying of the kegs and boxes across the village common to the castle, in which the master bore his full share of work, consumed nearly another hour. Some of the cottage lights ceased to burn. Not a soul stirred out of doors.

The entrance opened by Jerry was a little postern door, access to which was gained through the deserted and weed-grown church-yard, and the possible use of which was

entirely unsuspected by even the housekeeper, let alone the villagers at large. The men bore their burdens through this, traversing a long, low-arched passage-way, built entirely of stone and smelling like an ancient tomb. Thence their course was down a precipitous, narrow stairway, winding like the corkscrew stairs of a tower, until, at a depth of thirty feet or more, they reached a small square chamber, the air of which was mustiness itself. Here a candle was fastened in a bracket, and the men put down their loads. Here, too, it was that Jerry, when the last journey had been made, produced a bottle and glasses and dispensed his master's hospitality in raw spirits, which the men gulped down without a whisper about water.

'Mind!—day after to-morrow; five o'clock in the morning, sharp!' said The O'Mahony, in admonitory tones. Then he added, more softly: 'Jest take it easy to-morrow; loaf around to suit yourselves, so long's you keep sober. You've had a pritty tough day of it. Good-night. Jerry 'n me 'll do the rest. Jest pull the door to when you go out.'

With answering 'Good-nights,' and a formal hand-shake all around, the four villagers left the room. Their tired footsteps were heard with diminishing distinctness as they went up the stairs.

Jerry turned and surveyed his master from head to foot by the light of the candle on the wall.

'O'Mahony,' he said impressively, 'you're a divil, an' no mistake!'

The other put the bottle to his mouth first. Then he licked his lips and chuckled grimly.

'Them fellows was scared out of their boots, wasn't they? An' you, too, eh?' he asked.

'Well, sir, you know it as well as I, the lives of the lot of us would have been high-priced at a thrippenny-bit.'

'Pshaw, man! You fellows don't know what fun is.

Why, she was safe as a house every minute. An' here I was, goin' to compliment you on gittin' through the hull voyage without being sick once—thought, at last, I was really goin' to make a sailor of you.'

'Egor! afther to-day I'll believe I've the makin' of annything under the sun in me—or on top of it, ayther. But, sure, sir, you'll not deny 'twas timptin' Providence an' the saints' good-will to come in head over heels under wather, the way we did?'

'We *had* to be here—that's all,' said The O'Mahony briefly. 'I've got to meet a man to-morrow, at a place some distance from here, sure pop; and then there's the big job on next day.'

Jerry said no more, and The O'Mahony took the candle down from the iron ring in the wall.

'D'ye know, I noticed somethin' cur'ous in the wall out on the staircase here as we come down?' he said, bearing the light before him as he moved to the door. 'It's about a dozen steps up. Here it is! What d'ye guess that might a-been?'

The O'Mahony held the candle close to the curved wall, and indicated with his free hand a couple of regular and vertical seams in the masonry, about two feet apart, and nearly a man's height in length.

'There's a door there, or I'm a Dutchman,' he said, lifting and lowering the light in his scrutiny.

The mediæval builders could have imagined no sight more weird than that of the high, fantastic shadows thrown upon their winding, well-like walls by this drenched and saturnine figure, clad in oil-skins instead of armour, and peering into their handiwork with the curiosity of a man nurtured in a log-cabin.

'Egor! would it be a dure?' exclaimed the wondering Jerry

His companion handed the candle to him, and took from his pocket a big jack-knife—larger, if anything, than the weapon which had been left under the window of the little farmhouse at Five Forks. He ran the large blade up and down the two long, straight cracks, tapping the stonework here and there with the butt of the handle afterward. Finally, after numerous experiments, he found the trick—a bolt to be pushed down by a blade inserted not straight but obliquely—and a thick, iron-bound door, faced with masonry, but with an oaken lining, swung open, heavily and unevenly, upon some concealed pivots.

The O'Mahony took the light once more, thrust it forward to make sure of his footing, and then stepped over the newly-discovered threshold, Jerry close at his heels. They pushed their way along a narrow and evil-smelling passage, so low that they were forced to bend almost double. Suddenly, after traversing this for a long distance, their path was blocked by another door, somewhat smaller than the other. This gave forth a hollow sound when tested by blows.

'It ain't very thick,' said The O'Mahony. 'Take the candle, an' I'll put my shoulder against it. I guess I can burst her open.'

The resistance was even less than he had anticipated. One energetic shove sufficed; the door flew back with a swift splintering of rotten wood. The O'Mahony went stumbling sidelong into the darkness as the door gave way. At the moment a strange, rumbling sound was heard at some remote height above them, and then a crash nearer at hand, the thundering reverberation of which rang with loud echoes through the vault-like passage. The concussion almost put out the candle, and Jerry noted that the hand which he instinctively put out to shield the flame was trembling.

'Show a light in here, can't ye?' called out The O'Mahony from the black obscurity beyond the broken door. 'Sounds as if the hull darned castle 'd been blown down over our heads.'

Jerry timorously advanced, candle well out in front of him. Its small radiance served dimly to disclose what seemed to be a large chamber, or even hall, high-roofed and spacious. Its floor of stone flags was covered with dry mould. The walls were smoothed over with a gray coat of plastering, whole patches of which had here and there fallen, and more of which tumbled even now as they looked. They saw that this plastering had been decorated by zigzag, saw-toothed lines in three or four colours, now dulled and in places scarcely discernible. The room was irregularly shaped. At its narrower end was a big, roughly built fireplace, on the hearth of which lay ashes and some charred bits of wood, covered like the stone itself, by a dry film of mould. The O'Mahony held the candle under the flue. The way in which the flame swayed and pointed itself showed that the chimney was open.

Cooking utensils, some of metal, some of pottery, but all alike of strange form, were bestowed on the floor on either side of the hearth. There was a single wooden chair, with a high, pointed back, standing against the wall, and in front of this lay a rug of cowskin, the reddish hair of which came off at the touch. Beside this chair was a low, oblong wooden chest, with a lifting-lid curiously carved, and apparently containing nothing but rolls of parchment and leather-bound volumes.

At the other and wider end of the room was an archway built in the stone, and curtained by hangings of thick, mildewed cloth. The O'Mahony drew these aside, and Jerry advanced with the light.

In a little recess, and reaching from side to side of the

arched walls, was built a bed of oaken beams, its top the height of a man's middle. Withered and faded straw lay piled on the wood, and above this both thick cloth similar to the curtains and finer fabrics which looked like silk. The candle shook in Jerry's hand, and came near to falling, at the discovery which followed.

On the bed lay stretched the body of a bearded and tonsured man, clad in a long, heavy, dark woollen gown, girt at the waist with a leathern thong—as strangely dried and mummified as are the dead preserved in St. Michan's vaults at Dublin or in the Bleikeller of the Dom at Bremen. The shrivelled, tan-coloured face bore a weird resemblance to that of the hereditary bard.

The O'Mahony looked wonderingly down upon this grim spectacle, the while Jerry crossed himself.

'Guess there won't be much use of callin' a doctor for *him*,' said the master at last.

Then he backed away, to let the curtains fall, and yawned.

'I'm about tuckered out,' he said, stretching his arms. 'Let's go up now an' take somethin' warm, and git to bed. We'll keep mum about this place. P'rhaps—I shouldn't wonder—it might come in handy for O'Daly, sometime.'

CHAPTER XI.

A FACE FROM OUT THE WINDING-SHEET.

THE sun was shining brightly in a clear sky next morning, when the people of Muirisc finally got up out of bed, and, still rubbing their eyes, strolled forth to note the ravages of last night's storm, and talk with one another about it.

There was much to marvel at and discuss at length in garrulous groups before the cottage doors. One whole wing of the ancient convent structure—that which tradition ascribed to the pious building fervour of Cathal *an Diomuis*, or 'the Haughty'—had been thrown down during the night, and lay now a tumbled mass of stones and timber piled in wild disorder upon the *débris* of previous ruins. But inasmuch as the fallen building had long been roofless and disused, and its collapse meant only another added layer of chaos in the deserted convent-yard, Muirisc did not worry its head much about it, and even yawned in Cormac O'Daly's face as he wandered from one knot of gossips to another, relating legends about Cathal the Proud.

What interested them considerably more was the report, confirmed now by O'Daly himself, that just before the crash came, six people in the reception hall of the convent had distinctly heard the voice of the Hostage from the depths below the cloistral building. Everybody in Muirisc

knew all about the Hostage. They had been, so to speak, brought up with him. Prolonged familiarity with the pathetic story of his death in exile, here at Muirisc, and constant contact with his name as perpetuated in the title of their unique convent, made him a sort of oldest inhabitant of the place. Their lively imaginations now quickly built up and established the belief that he was heard to complain, somewhere under the convent, once every fifty years. Old Ellen Dumphy was able to fix the period with exactness because when the mysterious sound was last heard she was a young woman, and had her face bound up, and was almost 'distracted wid the sore teeth.'

But most interesting of all was the fact that there, before their eyes, riding easily upon the waters of the Muirisc, lay the *Hen Hawk*, as peacefully and safely at anchor as if no gale had ever thundered upon the cliffs outside. The four men of her crew, when they made their belated appearance in the morning sunlight out-of-doors, were eagerly questioned, and they told with great readiness and a flowering wealth of adjectives the marvellous story of how The O'Mahony aimed her in pitch darkness at the bar, and hurled her over it at precisely the psychological moment, with just the merest scraping of her keel. To the seafaring senses of those who stood now gazing at the vessel there was more witchcraft in this than in the subterranean voice of the Hostage even.

'Ah, thin, 'tis our O'Mahony's the grand divil of a man!' they murmured admiringly.

No work was to be expected, clearly, on the day after such an achievement as this. The villagers stood about, and looked at the squat coaster, snugly rising and sinking with the lazy movement of the tide, and watched for the master of Muirisc to show himself. They had never before been conscious of such perfect pride in and affection for

this strange Americanized chieftain of theirs. By an unerring factional instinct, they felt that this apotheosis of The O'Mahony in their hearts involved the discomfiture of O'Daly and the nuns, and they let the hereditary bard feel it, too.

'Ah, now, Cormac O'Daly,' one of the women called out to the poet, as he hung, black-visaged and dejected, upon the skirts of the group, 'tell me, man, was it anny of yer owld Diarmids and Cathals ye do be perplexin' us wid that wud a-steered that boat beyond over the bar at black midnight, wid a gale outside fit to blow mountains into the say? Sure, it's not botherin' his head wid books, or delutherin' his moind wid ancestral mummeries, or wearyin' the bones an' marrow out of the saints wid attendin' their business instead of his own, that *our* O'Mahony do be after practizin' !'

The bard opened his lips to reply. Then the gleam of enjoyment in the woman's words which shone from all the faces roundabout dismayed him. He shook his head, and walked away in silence.

Meanwhile The O'Mahony, after a comfortable breakfast, and a brief consultation with Jerry, had put on his hat and strolled out through the pretentious arched doorway of his tumble-down abode. From the outer gate he saw the clustered villagers upon the wharf, and guessed what they were saying and thinking about him and his boat. He smiled contentedly to himself, and lighted a cigar. Then, sucking this with gravity, hands in pockets and hat well back on head, he turned and sauntered across the turreted corner of his castle into the ancient churchyard, which lay between it and the convent. The place was one crowded area of mortuary wreckage—flat tombstones sunken deep into the earth; monumental tablets, once erect, now tipping at every crazy angle; pre-historic, weather-beaten

runic crosses lying broken and prone; more modern and ambitious sarcophagi of brick and stone, from which sides or ends had fallen away, revealing to every eye their ghostly contents; the ground covered thickly with nettles and umbrageous weeds, under which the unguided foot continually encountered old skulls and human bones—a graveyard such as can be seen nowhere in the world save in Western Ireland.

The O'Mahony picked his way across this village Golgotha, past the ruins of the ancient church, and into the grounds to the rear of the convent buildings, clambering as he went over whole series of tumbled masonry heaped in weed-grown ridges, until he stood upon the edge of the havoc wrought by this latest storm.

No rapt antiquary ever gazed with more eagerness upon the remains of a pre-Aryan habitation than The O'Mahony now displayed in his scrutiny of the destruction worked by last night's storm, and of the group of buildings its fury had left unscathed. He took a paper from his pocket, and compared a rude drawing upon it with various points in the architecture about him which he indicated with nods of the head. People watching him might have differed as to whether he was a student of antiquities, a builder, or an insurance agent. Probably none would have guessed that he was striving to identify some one of the numerous chimneys before him with a certain fireplace which he knew of, five-and-twenty feet underground.

As he stood thus, absorbed in calculation, he felt a little hand steal into his big palm, and nestle there confidingly. His face put on a pleased smile, even before he bent it toward the intruder.

'Hello, Skeezucks, is that you?' he said gently. 'Well, they've gone an' busted your old convent up the back, here, in great shape, ain't they?'

Every one of the score of months that had passed since these two first met, seemed to have added something to the stature of little Kate O'Mahony. She had grown, in truth, to be a tall girl for her age—and an erect girl, holding her head well in air, into the bargain. Her face had lost its old shy, scared look—at least in this particular company. It was filling out into the likeness of a pretty face, with a pleasant glow of health upon the cheeks, and a happy twinkle in the big, dark eyes.

For answer, the child lifted and swung his hand, and playfully butted her head sidewise against his waist.

'Tis I that wouldn't mind if it all came down,' she said in the softest West Carbery brogue the ear could wish.

'What!' exclaimed the other in mock consternation. 'Well, I never! Why, here's a gal that don't want to go to school, or learn how to read an' cipher, or nothin'! P'raps you'd ruther work in the lobster fact'ry?'

'No, I'd sail in the boat with you,' said Kate, promptly and with confidence.

The O'Mahony laughed aloud.

'I guess you'd 'a' got your fill of it yisterday, Siss,' he remarked.

'It's that I'd have liked best of all,' she pursued. 'Ah! take me with you, O'Mahony, whin next the waves are up and the wind's tearin' fit to burst itsilf. I'll not die till I've been out in the thick of it, wance for all!'

'Why, gal alive, you'd a-be'n smashed into sausage-meat!' chuckled the man. 'Still, you're right, though. There ain't nothin' else in the world fit to hold a candle to it. Igad! Some time I *will* take you, Siss!'

The child spoke more seriously:

'Sure, we're the O'Mahonys of the Coast of White Foam, according to O'Heerin's old verse, and it's in my blood as well as yours.'

'Right you are, Siss!' he responded, smiling as he added under his breath: 'an' mebbe a trifle more.' Then, after a moment's pause, he changed the subject.

'See here; you're up on these things—in fact, they don't seem to learn you anything else—hain't I heerd O'Daly tell about the old O'Mahonys luggin' round a box full o' saints' bones when they went on a rampage, to sort o' give 'em luck! I got to thinkin' about it last night after I went to bed, but I couldn't jest git it straight in my head.'

'It's the *cathach*' (she pronounced it *caha*) 'you mane,' Kate answered. 'Sometimes it contained bones, but more often 'twas a crozier or a holy book from the saint's own pen, or a part of his vestments.'

'No; I like the bones notion best,' said The O'Mahony. 'There's something substantial an' solid about bones. If you've got a genuine saint's bones, it's a thing he's bound to take an interest in, an' see through; whereas, them other things—his books an' his clo'se an' so on—why, he may a-be'n sick an' tired of 'em years 'fore he died.'

It was the girl's turn to laugh.

'It's a strange new fit of piety ye've on yeh, O'Mahony,' she said, with the familiarity of a spoiled pet. 'Sure, when I tell the nuns, they'll be lookin' to see you build up a whole foine new convint for 'em without delay.'

'No; I'm savin' that till you get to be the boss nun,' said The O'Mahony dryly, and with a grin.

''Tis older than Methusalem ye'll be growin' thin?' asked the child laughingly. And with that she seized his hand once more and dragged him forward to a closer inspection of the ruins.

Some hours later, having been driven across country to Dunmanway by Malachy, and thence taken the local train

onward, The O'Mahony found himself in the station at Ballineen, with barely time enough to hurry across the tracks and leap into the train which was already starting westward. In this he was borne back over the road he had just traversed, until a stop was made at Manch station. The O'Mahony alighted here, much pleased with the strategy which made him appear to have come from the east. He took an outside car, and was driven some two miles into the bleak, mountainous country beyond Toome, to a wayside inn known as Kearney's Retreat. Here he dismounted, bidding the carman solace himself with drink, and wait.

Entering the tavern, he paused at the bar and asked for two small bottles of porter to be poured in one large glass. Two or three men were loitering about the room, and he spoke just loud enough to make sure that all might hear him. Then, having drained the glass, and stood idly conversing for a minute or two with the woman at the bar, he made his way through a side-door into the adjoining ball alley, where some young fellows of the neighbourhood chanced to be engaged in a game.

He stood apart, watching their play, for only a few moments. Then one of the men whom he had seen but not looked closely at in the bar, came up to him, and said from behind in an interrogative whisper :

‘Captain Harrier, I believe?’

‘Yes,’ said The O'Mahony, ‘Captain Harrier,’ with a vague notion of having heard that voice before.

Then he turned, and in the straggling roof-light of the alley beheld the other's face. It taxed to the utmost every element of self-possession in him to choke down the exclamation which sprang to his lips.

The man before him was Linsky !—Linsky risen from the dead, with the scarred gash visible on his throat, and the

shifty blue-green eyes still blood-shot, and set with reddened eyelids in a freckled face.

'Yes—Captain—Harrier,' he repeated, lingering upon each word, as his brain fiercely strove to assert mastery over amazement, apprehension and perplexity.

The new-comer looked full into The O'Mahony's face without any sign whatever of recognition.

'Thin I'm to place meself at your disposal,' he said briefly. 'You know more of what's in the air than I do, no doubt. Everything is arranged, I hear, for risings in both Cork an' Tralee to-morrow, an' in manny other places in both counties besides. Officially, however, I know nothing of this—an' have no right to know. I'm just to put meself at your command, and deliver anny messages you desire to sind to other cinters in your district. Here's me papers.'

The O'Mahony barely glanced at the inclosures of the envelope handed him. They took the familiar form of a business letter of introduction, and a commercial contract, signed by a firm name which to the uninitiated bore no significance. He noted that the name given was 'Major Lynch.' He observed also, with satisfaction, that his hand, as it held the papers, was entirely steady.

'Everybody's been notified,' he said, after a time, instinctively assuming a slight hoarseness of speech. 'I've been all over the ground myself. You can meet me—let's see—say at the bottom of the black rock jest overlookin' the marteller tower at—at eleven o'clock, sharp, to-morrow forenoon. The rock's behind the tower, mind—t'other side of the coast-guard houses. You'll see me land from my boat.'

'I'll not fail,' said the other. 'I can bring a gun—*moryah*, I'm shooting at say-gulls.'

'There ain't much need of that,' responded the O'Mahony. 'You might git stopped an' questioned. There'll be guns enough. Of course, the takin' of the

tower'll be as easy as rollin' off a log. The thing'll be to hold it afterward.'

'We'll howld whatever we take, sur, all Ireland over,' said Major Lynch, with enthusiasm.

'I hope so! Good-bye. Mind, eleven sharp!' was the response, and the two men separated.

The O'Mahony did not wait for the finish of the game of ball, but sauntered out of the alley through the end door, walked to his car, and set off direct for Toome. At this place he decided to drive on to Dunmanway station. Dismissing the carman at the door, and watching his departure, he walked over to the hotel, joined the waiting Malachy, and soon was well on his jolting way back to Muirisc.

Curiously enough, the bearing of Linsky's return upon his own personal fortunes and safety bore a very small part in The O'Mahony's meditations as he clung to his seat over the rough homeward road. All that might take care of itself, and he pushed it almost contemptuously aside in his mind. What he did ponder upon unceasingly, and with growing distrust, was the suspicion with which the manner of the man's offer to deliver messages had inspired him.

CHAPTER XII.

A TALISMAN AND A TRAITOR.

AT five o'clock on this February morning it was still dark. For more than half an hour a light had been from time to time visible, flitting about in the inhabited parts of the castle. There was no answering gleam from any of the cottage windows along the other side of the village green ; but all the same, solitary figures began to emerge from the cabins, until eighteen men had crossed the open space and were gathered upon the little stone pier at the edge of the *muirisc*. They stood silently together, with only now and again a whispered word, waiting for they knew not what.

Presently, by the faint semblance of light which was creeping up behind the eastern hills, they saw Jerry, Malachy and Dominic approaching, each bearing a burden on his back. These were two of the long coffin-like boxes and two kegs—one prodigiously heavy, the other by comparison light. They were deposited on the wharf without a word, and the two first went back again, while Dominic silently led the others in the task of bestowing what all present knew to be guns, lead and powder, on board the *Hen Hawk*. This had been done, and the men had again waited for some minutes before The O'Mahony made his appearance.

He advanced through the obscure morning twilight with

a brisk step, whistling softly as he came. The men noted that he wore shooting clothes, with gaiters to the knee, and a wide-brimmed, soft black hat, even then known in Ireland as the American hat, just as the Americans had previously called it the Kossuth.

Half-way, but within full view of the waiting group, he stopped, and looked critically at the sky. Then he stepped aside from the path, and took off this hat of his. The men wondered what it meant.

Jerry was coming along again from the castle, his arms half filled with parcels. He stopped beside the chief, and stood facing the path, removing his hat as well.

Then the puzzled observers saw Malachy looming out of the misty shadows, also bare-headed, and carrying at arms' length before him a square case, about in bulk like a hat-box. As he passed The O'Mahony and Jerry they bowed, and then fell in behind him, and marched, still uncovered, toward the landing-place.

The tide was at its flood and the *Hen Hawk* had been hauled by ropes up close to the wharf. Malachy, with stolid face and solemn mien, strode in fine military style over the gunwale and along the flush deck to the bow. Here he deposited his mysterious burden, bowed to it, and then put on the hat he had been carrying under his arm.

The men crowded on board at this—all save two, who now rowed forward in a small boat, and began pulling the *Hen Hawk* out over the bar with a hawser. As the unwieldy craft slowly moved, the O'Mahony turned a long ruminative gaze upon the sleeping hamlet they were leaving behind. The whole eastern sky was awake now with light—light which lay in brilliant bars of lemon hue upon the hill-tops, and mellowed upward through opal and pearl into fleecy ashen tints. The two in the boat dropped behind, fastened their tiny craft to the stern, and clambered on board.

A fresh, chill breeze caught and filled the jib once they had passed the bar, and the crew laid their hands upon the ropes, expecting orders to hoist the mainsail and mizzen-sheets. But The O'Mahony gave no sign, and lounged in silence against the tiller, spitting over the taffrail into the water, until the vessel had rounded the point and stood well off the cliffs, out of sight of Muirisc, plunging softly along through the swell. Then he beckoned Dominic to the helm, and walked over toward the mast, with a gesture which summoned the whole score of men about him. To them he began the first speech he had ever made in his life :

'Now, boys,' he said, 'prob'ly you've noticed that the name's been painted off the stern of this 'ere vessel, overnight. You must 'a' figured it out from that, that we're out on the loose, so to speak. There's only a few of you that have ever known me as a Fenian. It was agin the rules that you should know me, but I've known you all, an' I've be'n watchin' you drill, night after night, unbeknown to you. In fact, it come to the same thing as my drillin' you myself --because, until I taught your center, Jerry, he knew about as much about it as a pig knows about ironin' a shirt. Well, now you all see me. I'm your boss Fenian in these parts.'

'Hurroo !' cried the men, waving their hats.

I don't really suppose this intelligence surprised them in the least, but they fell gracefully in with The O'Mahony's wish that it should seem to do so, as is the polite wont of their race.

'Well,' he continued, colloquially, 'here we are ! We've been waitin' and workin' for a deuce of a long time. Now, at last, there's somethin' for us to do. It ain't my fault that it didn't come months and months ago. But that don't matter now. What I want to know is : are you game to follow me ?'

‘We are, O’Mahony!’ they called out, as one man.

‘That’s right. I guess you know me well enough by this time to know I don’t ask no man to go where I’m afeared to go myself. There’s goin’ to be some fightin’, though, an’ you fellows are new to that sort of thing. Now, I’ve be’n a soldier, on an’ off, a good share of my life. I ain’t a bit braver than you are, only I know more about what it’s like than you do. An’ besides, I should be all-fired sorry to have any of ye git hurt. You’ve all be’n as good to me as your skins could hold, an’ I’ll do my best to see you through this thing safe an’ sound.’

‘Cheers for The O’Mahony!’ someone cried out excitedly; but he held up a warning hand.

‘Better not holler till you git out o’ the woods,’ he said, and then went on: ‘Seein’ that you’ve never, any of you, be’n under fire, I’ve thought of somethin’ that’ll help you to keep a stiff upper-lip, when the time comes to need it. A good many of you are O’Mahonys born; all of you come from men who have followed The O’Mahony of their time into battle. Well, in them old days, you know, they used to carry their *cathach* with them, to bring ’em luck, same as American boys spit on their bait when they’re fishin’. So I’ve had Malachy, here, bring along a box, specially made for the purpose, an’ it’s chuck full of the bones of a family saint of mine. We found him—me an’ Jerry—after the wind had blown part of the convent down, layin’ just where he was put when he died, with the crucifix in his hands, and a monk’s gown on. I ain’t a specially good man, an’ p’r’aps you fellows have noticed that I ain’t much of a hand for church, or that sort of thing; but I says to myself, when I found this dead an’ dried body of an O’Mahony who *was* pious an’ good an’ all that: “You shall come along with us, friend, an’ see our tussle through.” He was an Irishman in the days when Irishmen run their own country in

their own way, an' I thought he'd be glad to come along with us now, an' see whether we was fit to call ourselves Irishmen, too. An' I reckon you'll be glad, too, to have him with us.'

Stirred by a solitary impulse, the men looked toward the box at the bow—a rudely-built little chest, with strips of worn leather nailed to its side and top—and took off their hats.

'We are, O'Mahony!' they cried.

'Up with your sails then!' The O'Mahony shouted, with a sudden change to eager animation.

And in a twinkling the *Hen Hawk* had ceased dallying, and with stiffly bowed canvas and a buoyant, forward careen, was kicking the spray behind her into the receding picture of the Dunmanus cliffs.

Nearly five hours later, a little council, or, one might better say, dialogue of war, was held at the stern of the speeding vessel. The rifles had long since been taken out and put together, and the cartridges which Jerry had already made up distributed. The men were gathered forward, ready for whatever adventure their chief had in mind.

'I'm goin' to lay to in a minute or two,' confided The O'Mahony to Jerry, in an undertone.

Jerry looked inquiringly up and down the deserted stretch of brown headlands before them. Not a sign of habitation was in view.

'Is it *this* we've come to besayge and capture?' he asked, with incredulity.

'No. Right round that corner, though, lays the marteller tower we're after. Up to yesterday my plan was jest to sail bang up to her an' walk in. But something's happened to change my notions. They've sent a fellow—an American Irishman—to be what they call my "cojutor." I

don't jest know what it means ; but, whatever it is, I don't think much of it. He's waitin' over there for me to land. Well, now, I'm goin' to land here instid, an' take five of the men with me, an' kind o' santer down toward the tower from the land side, keepin' behind the hedges. You'll stay on board here, with Dominic at the helm under your orders, and only the jib and mizzen-top up, and jest mosey along into the cove toward the tower, keepin' your men out o' sight and watchin' for me. If there's a nigger in the fence, I'll smoke him out that way.'

Some further directions in detail followed, and then the bulk of the canvas was struck, and the vessel hove to. The small boat was drawn to the side, and the landing party descended to it. One of their own number took the oars, for it was intended to keep the boat in waiting on the beach. Their guns lay in the bottom, and they were conscious of a novel weight of ammunition in their pockets. They waved their hands in salutation to the friends and neighbours they were leaving, and then, with a vigorous sweep of the oars, the boat went tossing on her course to the barren, rocky shore.

The O'Mahony, curled up on the seat at the bow, scanned the wide prospect with a roving scrutiny. No sail was visible on the whole horizon. A drab, hazy stain over the distant sky-line told only that the track of the great Atlantic steamers lay outward many miles. On the land side—where rough, blackened boulders rose in ugly points from the lapping water, as outposts to serried ranks of lichened rocks which, in their turn, straggled backward in slanting ascent to the summit, masked by shaggy growths of furze—no token of human life was visible.

A landing-place was found, and the boat securely drawn up on shore beyond highwater mark. Then The O'Mahony led the way, gun in hand, across the slippery reach of wet

sea-weed, and thence, by winding courses, obliquely up the hill-side. He climbed from crag to crag with the agility of a goat, but the practised Muirisc men kept close at his heels.

Arrived at the top, he paused in the shelter of the furze bushes to study the situation.

It was a great and beautiful panorama upon which he looked inquiringly down. The broad bay lay proudly in the arms of an encircling wall of cliffs, whose terraced heights rose and spread with the dignity of some amphitheatre of the giants. At their base, the blue waters broke in a caressing ripple of cream-like foam: afar off, the sunshine crowned their purple heads with a golden haze. Through the centre of this noble sweep of sheltering hills cleft the wooded gorge of a river, whose mouth kissed the strand in the screening shadow of a huge mound, reared precipitously above the sea-front, but linked by level stretches of sward to the mainland behind. On the summit of this mound, overlooking the bay, was one of those curious old martello towers with which England marked the low-comedy stage of her panic about Buonaparte's invasion.

The tower—a squat, circular stone fort, with a basement for magazine purposes, and an upper story for defensive operations—kept its look-out for Corsican ghosts in solitude. Considerably to this side, on the edge of the cliff, was a white group of coast-guard houses, in the yard of which two or three elderly men in sailor attire could be seen sunning themselves. Away in the distance, on the farther bend of the bay, the roofs and walls of a cluster of cottages were visible, and above these, among the trees, scattered glimpses of wealthier residences.

Of all this vast spectacle The O'Mahony saw nothing but the martello tower, and the several approaches to it past the coast-guard houses. He chose the best of these, and

led the way, crouching low behind the line of hedges, until the whole party halted in the cover of a clump of young sycamores, upon the edge of the open space leading to the mound. A hundred feet away from them, at the base of a jagged boulder of black slatish substance, stood a man, his face turned toward the tower and the sea. It was Linsky.

After a time he lifted his hand, as if in signal to someone beyond.

The O'Mahony, from his shelter behind, could see that the *Hen Hawk* had rounded the point, and was lazily rocking her way along across the bay, shoreward toward the tower. For a moment he assumed that Linsky's sign was intended for the vessel.

Then some transitory movement on the surface of the tower itself caught his wandering glance, and in the instant he had mastered every detail of a most striking incident. A man in a red coat had suddenly appeared at the landward window of the martello tower, made a signal to Linsky, and vanished like a flash.

The O'Mahony thoughtfully raised his rifle, and fastened his attention upon that portion of Linsky's breast and torso which showed above the black, unshaken sight at the end of its barrel.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RETREAT WITH THE PRISONERS.

THE *Hen Hawk* was idly drifting into the cove toward the little fishing-smack pier of stone and piles which ran out like a tongue from the lower end of the mound. Only two of her men were visible on deck. A group of gulls wheeled and floated about the thick little craft as she crawled landward.

These things The O'Mahony vaguely noted as a background to the figure of the traitor by the rock, which he studied now with a hard-lined face and stony glance over the shining rifle-barrel.

He hesitated, let the weapon sink, raised it again—then once for all put it down. He would not shoot Linsky.

But the problem what to do instead pressed all the more urgently for solution.

The O'Mahony pondered it gravely, with an alert gaze scanning the whole field of the rock, the towered mound and the waters beyond, for helping hints. All at once his face brightened in token of a plan resolved upon. He whispered some hurried directions to his companions, and then, gun in hand, quitted his ambush. Bending low, with long, stealthy strides, he stole along the line of yew hedge to the rear of the rock which sheltered Linsky. He reached

it without discovery, and, still noiselessly, half slipped, half leaped down the earthen bank beside it. At this instant his shadow betrayed him. Linsky turned, his lips opened to speak. Then, without a word, he reeled and fell like a log under a terrific sidelong blow on jaw and skull from the stock of The O'Mahony's clubbed gun.

The excited watchers from the sycamore shield behind saw him fall, and saw their leader spring upon his sinking form and drag it backward out of sight of the martello tower. Linsky was wearing a noticeable russet-brown short coat. They saw the O'Mahony strip this off the other's prostrate body and exchange it for his own. Then he put on Linsky's hat—a drab, low-crowned felt, pulled well over his eyes—and stood out boldly in the noon sunlight, courting observation from the tower. He took a handkerchief from his pocket and spread it out upon the black surface of the rock, and began pacing up and down before it with his eyes on the tower.

Presently the same red-coated apparition was momentarily visible at the land-side window. The O'Mahony held up his hand and went through a complicated gesture which should signify that he was coming over to the tower, and desired the other to come down and talk with him. This other gave a sign of comprehension and assent, and disappeared.

The O'Mahony walked, unarmed, and with a light, springing step, across the sloping sward to the tower. He paused at the side of its gray wall for an instant, to note that the *Hen Hawk* lay only a few feet distant from the pier-end. Then he entered the open ground-door of the tower, and found himself in a circular, low, stone room, which, though whitewashed, seemed dark after the bright sunlight outside. Some barrels stood in a row against the wall, and one of these was filled with soiled cotton-waste

which had been used for cleaning guns. The newcomer helped himself to a large handful of this, and took from his pocket a compact coil of stout packing-cord. Then he moved toward the little iron staircase at the other end of the chamber, and, leaning with his back against it, waited.

The next minute the door above opened, and the clatter of spurred boots rang out on the metal steps. The O'Mahony's sidelong glance saw two legs, clad in blue regimental trousers with a red stripe, descend past his head, and then the flaring vision of a scarlet jacket.

'Well, they're landing, it seems,' said the officer, as his foot was on the bottom step.

The O'Mahony turned like a leopard, and sprang forward, flinging his arm around the other's neck, and jamming him backward against the steps and wall, while, with his free hand, he thrust the greasy, noxious rags into his mouth and face. The struggle between the two strong men was fierce for a moment. Then the officer, blinded and choking under the gag, felt himself being helplessly bound, as if with wires, so tightly were the merciless ligatures drawn round arms and legs and head—and then hoisted into mid-air, and ignominiously jolted forward through space, with the effect of riding pickaback on a giant kangaroo.

The O'Mahony emerged from the tower, bent almost double under the burden of the stalwart captive, who still kept up a vain writhing attempt at resistance. The whole episode had lasted scarcely two minutes, and no one above seemed to have heard the few muffled sounds of the conflict.

With a single glance toward the companions he had left in hiding among the sycamores, he began a hasty staggering course diagonally down the side of the mound toward the water-front. He did not even stop to learn whether pursuit



THE O'MAHONY CARRYING OFF THE BRITISH OFFICER.



was on foot, or if his orders had been obeyed concerning Linsky.

At the foot of the hill he had to force his way through a thick thorn hedge to gain the roadway leading to the pier. Weighted as he was, the task was a difficult one, and when it was at last triumphantly accomplished, his clothes hung in tatters about him, and he was covered with scratches. He doggedly made his way onward, however, with bowed bare head and set teeth, stumbling along the quay to the vessel's edge. The *Hen Hawk* had been brought up to the pier-corner, and The O'Mahony, staggering over the gun-wale, let his burden fall, none too gently, upon the deck.

A score of yards to the rear came, at a loping dog-trot, the five men he had left behind him among the trees. One of them bore an armful of guns and his master's discarded coat and hat. Each of the others grasped either a leg or an arm of the still insensible Linsky, and, as they in turn leapt upon the vessel, they slung him, face downward and supinely limp, sprawling beside the officer.

With all swiftness, sails were rattled up, and the weight of half-a-dozen brawny shoulders was laid against pike-poles to push the vessel off.

The tower had suddenly taken the alarm! The reverberating 'boom-m-m' of a cannon sent its echoes from cliff to cliff, and the casement windows under the machicolated eaves were bristling with gun-barrels flashing in the noon-day sun.

For one anxious minute—even as the red-coats began to issue, like a file of wasps, from the doorway at the bottom of the tower—the sails hung slack. Then a shifting land-breeze caught and filled the sheets, the *Hen Hawk* shook herself, dipped her beak in the sunny waters—and glided serenely forward.

She was standing out to sea, a fair hundred yards from

land, when the score of soldiers came to the finish of their chase on the pier-end, and gazed, with hot faces and short breath, upon her receding hull. She was still within range, and they instinctively half-poised their guns to shoot. But here was the difficulty: The O'Mahony had lifted the grotesquely bound and gagged figure of their commanding officer, and held it upright beside him at the helm.

For this reason they forbore to shoot, and contented themselves with a verbal volley of curses and shouts of rage, which may have startled the circling gulls, but raised only a staid momentary smile on the gaunt face of The O'Mahony. He shrilled back a prompt rejoinder in the teeth of the breeze, which belongs to polite literature no more than did the cries to which it was a response.

Thus the *Hen Hawk* ploughed her steady way out to open sea—until the red-coats which had been dodging about on the heights above were lost to sight through even the strongest glass, and the brown headlands of the coast had become only dim shadows of blue haze on the sky line.

Linsky had been borne below, to have his head washed and bandaged, and then to sleep his swoon off, if so be that he was to recover sensibility at all during what remained to him of terrestrial existence. The British officer had even before that been relieved of the odious gun-rag gag, and some of the more uncomfortable of his bonds. He had been given a seat, too, on a coil of rope beside the capstan—against which he leaned in obdurate silence, with his brows bent in a prolonged scowl of disgust and wrath. More than one of the crew, and of the non-maritime Muirisc men as well, had asked him if he wanted anything, and got not so much as a shake of the head in reply.

The O'Mahony paced up and down the forward deck for a long time, watching this captive of his, and vaguely

revolving in his thoughts the problem of what to do with him. The taking of prisoners had been no part of his original scheme. Indeed, for that matter, nothing of this original scheme seemed to be left. He had had, he realized now, a distinct foreboding of Linsky's treachery. Yet its discovery had as completely altered everything as if it had come upon him entirely unawares. He had done none of the things which he had planned to do. The *cathach* had been brought for nothing. Not a shot had been fired. The martello tower remained untaken.

When he ruminated upon these things he ground his teeth and pressed his thin lips together. It was all Linsky's doing. He had Linsky safe below, however. It would be strange indeed if this fact did not turn out to have interesting consequences; but there would be time enough later on to deal with that.

The presence of the British officer was of more immediate importance. The O'Mahony walked again past the capstan, and looked his prisoner over askance. He was a tall man, well on in the thirties, slender, yet with athletic shoulders; his close-cropped hair and short moustache were of the colour of flax; his face and neck were weather-beaten and browned. The face was a good one, with shapely features and a straightforward expression, albeit, seen now at its worst, under a scowl and the smear of the rags. After much hesitation, The O'Mahony finally made up his mind to speak, and walked around to confront the officer with an amiable nod.

'S'pose you're jest mad through an' through at bein' grabbed that way an' tied up like a calf goin' to market, an' run out in that sort o' style,' he said in a cheerfully confidential tone. 'I know *I'd* be jest bilin'! But I hope you don't bear no malice. It *had* to be done, an' done that way, too! You kin see that yourself.'

The Englishman looked up with surly brevity of glance at the speaker, and then contemptuously turned his face away. He said never a word.

The O'Mahony continued affably :

'One thing I'm sorry for : It *was* pritty rough to have your mouth stuffed with gun-wipers ; but really, there wasn't anything else handy, and time was pressin'. Now what d'ye say to havin' a drink—jest to rensie the taste out o' your mouth ?'

The officer kept his eyes fixed on the distant horizon. His lips twitched under the moustache with a movement that might signify temptation, but more probably reflected an impulse to tell his questioner to go to the devil. Which-ever it was he said nothing.

The O'Mahony spoke again, with the least suspicion of acerbity in his tone.

'See here,' he said ; 'don't flatter yourself that I'm worryin' much whether you take a drink or not ; an' I'm not a man that's much given to takin' slack from anybody, whether they wear shoulder-straps or not. You're my pris'ner. I took you—took you myself, an' let you have a good lively rassle for your money. It wasn't jest open an' aboveboard, p'r'aps, but then you was layin' there with your men hid, dependin' on a sneak an' a traitor to deliver me an' my fellows into your hands. So it's as broad as 'tis long. Only I don't want to make it especially rough for you, an' I thought I'd offer you a drink; an' have a talk with you about what's to be done next. But if you're too mad to talk or drink, either, why, I kin wait till you cool down.'

Once more the officer looked up, and this time, after some hesitation, he spoke, stiffly :

'I *should* like some whisky and water, if you have it—and will be good enough,' he said.

The O'Mahony brought the beverage from below with his

own hand. Then, as on a sudden thought, he took out his knife, knelt down and cut all the cords which still bound the other's limbs.

The officer got gingerly upon his feet, kicked his legs out straight and stretched his arms.

'I wish you had done that before,' he said, taking the glass and eagerly drinking off the contents.

'I dunno why I didn't think of it,' said The O'Mahony, with genuine regret. 'Fact is, I had so many other things on my mind. This findin' yourself sold out by a fellow that you trusted with your life is enough to kerflummux any man.'

'That ought not to surprise any Irishman, I should think,' said the other curtly. 'However much Irish conspiracies may differ in other respects, they're invariably alike in one thing. There's always an Irishman who sells the secret to the Government.'

The O'Mahony made no immediate answer. The bitter remark had suddenly suggested to him the possibility that all the other movements in Cork and Kerry, planned for that day, had also been betrayed! He had been too gravely occupied with his own concerns to give this a thought before. As he turned the notion over now in his mind, it assumed the form of a settled conviction of universal treachery.

'There's a darned sight o' truth in what you say,' he assented seriously, after a pause.

The tone of the reply took the English officer by surprise. He looked up with more interest, and the expression of cold sulkiness faded from his face. 'You got off with great luck,' he said. 'If they had many more like you, perhaps they might do something worth while. You're an Irish-American, I fancy? And you have seen military service?'

The O'Mahony answered both questions with an affirmative nod.

'Then I'm astonished,' the officer went on, 'that you and men like you, who know what war is really like, should come over here, and spend your money and risk your lives and liberty, without the hope of doing anything more than cause us a certain amount of bother. As a soldier, you must know that you have no earthly chance of success. The odds are ten thousand to one against you.'

The O'Mahony's eyes permitted themselves a momentary twinkle. 'Well, now, mister,' he said carelessly; 'I dunno so much about that. Take you an' me, now, f'r instance, jest as we stand: I don't reckon that bettin' men 'u'd precisely tumble over one another in a rush to put their money on *you*. Maybe I'm no judge, but that's the way it looks to me. What do you think yourself, now—honest Injun?'

The Englishman was not responsive to this light view of the situation. He frowned again, and pettishly shrugged his shoulders.

'Of course, I did not refer to *that*!' he said. 'My misadventure is ridiculous and—ah—personally inconvenient—but it—ah—isn't war. You take nothing by it.'

'Oh, yes—I've taken a good deal—too much, in fact,' said The O'Mahony, going off into a brown study over the burden of his acquisitions which his words conjured up. He paced up and down beside his prisoner for a minute or two. Then he halted, and turned to him for counsel.

'What do you think, yourself, would be the best thing for me to do with you, now 't I've got you?' he asked.

'Oh—really!—really, I must decline to advise with you upon the subject,' the other replied frostily.

'On the one hand,' mused The O'Mahony aloud, 'you got scooped in afore you had time to fire a shot, or do any

mischief at all—so 't we don't owe you no grudge, so to speak. Well, that's in your favour. And then there's your mouth rammed full of gun-waste—that ought to count some on your side, too.'

The Englishman looked at him, curiosity struggling with dislike in his glance, but said nothing.

'On t' other hand,' pursued The O'Mahony, 'you ain't quite a prisoner of war, because you was openly dealin' with a traitor and spy, and playin' to come the gouge game over me an' my men. That's a good deal agin' you. For sake of argument, let's say the thing is a saw-off, so far as what's happened already is concerned. The big question is: What's *goin'* to happen?'

'Really——' the officer began again, and then closed his lips abruptly.

'Yes,' the other went on, 'that's where the shoe pinches. I s'pose now, if I was to land you on the coast yonder, anywhere, you wouldn't give your word to not start an alarm for forty-eight hours, would you?'

'Certainly not!' said the Englishman, with prompt decision.

'No, I thought not. Of course, the alarm 's been given hours ago, but your men didn't see me, or git enough of a notion of my outfit to make their description dangerous. It's different with you.'

The officer nodded his head to indicate that he was becoming interested in the situation, and saw the point.

'So that really the most sensible thing I could do, for myself and my men, 'u'd be to lash you to a keg of lead and drop you overboard—wouldn't it, now?'

The Englishman kept his eyes fixed on the middle distance of gently heaving waters, and did not answer the question. The O'Mahony, watching his unmoved countenance with respect, made pretence of waiting for a reply, and

leaned idly against the capstan to fill his pipe. After a long pause he was forced to break the silence.

'It sounds rough,' he said; 'but it's the safest way out of the thing. Got a wife an' family?'

The officer turned for the fraction of an instant to scowl indignantly, the while he snapped out:

'That's none of your d——d business!'

Whistling softly to himself, with brows a trifle lifted to express surprise, The O'Mahony walked the whole length of the deck and back, pondering this reply.

'I've made up my mind,' he announced at last, upon his return. 'We'll land you in an hour or so—or at least give you the dingey and some food and drink, and let you row yourself in, say, six or seven miles. You can manage it all right before nightfall—an' I'll take my chances on your startin' the hue-an'-cry.'

'Understand, I promise nothing!' interposed the other.

'No, that's all right,' said The O'Mahony. 'Mind, if I thought there was any way by which you was likely to get these men o' mine into trouble, I'd have no more scruple about jumpin' you into the water there than I would about pullin' a fish out of it. But, as I figure it out, they don't stand in any danger. As for me—well, as I said, I'll take my chances. It'll make me a heap o' trouble, I dare say, but I deserve that. This trip o' mine's been a fool-performance from the word "go," and it's only fair I should pay for it.'

The Englishman looked up at the yawl rigging, taut under the strain of filled sails; at the men huddled together forward: last of all at his captor. His eyes softened.

'You're not half a bad sort,' he said, 'in—ah—spite of the gun-waste. I should think it likely that your men would never be troubled, if they go home, and—ah—behave sensibly.'

The O'Mahony nodded as if a pledge had been given.

'That's what I want,' he said. 'They are simply good fellows who jest went into this thing on my account.'

'But in all human probability,' the officer went on, '*you* will be caught and punished. It will be a miracle if you escape.'

The O'Mahony blew smoke from his pipe with an incredulous grin, and the other went on :

'It does not rest alone with me, I assure you. A minute detailed description of your person, Captain Harrier, has been in our possession for two days.'

'I-gad ! that reminds me,' broke in The O'Mahony, his face darkening as he spoke—'the man who gave you that name and that description is lyin' downstairs with a cracked skull.'

'I don't know that it is any part of my duty,' said the officer, 'to interest myself in that person, or—ah—what befalls him.'

'No,' said The O'Mahony, 'I guess not ! *I guess not !*'

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REINTERMENT OF LINSKY.

THE red winter sun sank to hide itself below the waste of Atlantic waters as the *Hen Hawk*, still held snugly in the grasp of the breeze, beat round the grim cliffs of Three-Castle Head, and entered Dunmanus Bay. The Englishman had been set adrift hours before, and by this time, no doubt, the telegraph had spread to every remotest point on the Southern and Western coast warning descriptions of the vessel and its master. Perhaps even now their winged flight into the west was being followed from Cape Clear, which lay behind them in the misty and darkening distance. Still the *Hen Hawk's* course was confidently shaped homeward, for many miles of bog and moorland separated Muirisc from any electric current.

The O'Mahony had hung in meditative solitude over the tiller for hours, watching the squatting groups of retainers playing silently at 'spoil-five' on the forward deck, and revolving in his mind the thousand and one confused and clashing thoughts which this queer new situation suggested. As the sun went down he called to Jerry, and the two, standing together at the stern, looked upon the great ball of fire descending behind the gray expanse of trackless waters, without a word. Rude and untutored as they were, both

were conscious, in some vague way, that when this sun should rise again their world would be a different thing.

'Well, pard,' said the master, when only a bar of flaming orange marked where the day had gone, 'it'll be a considerable spell, I reckon, afore I see that sort o' thing in these waters again.'

'Is it lavin' the country we are, thin?' asked Jerry, in a sympathetic voice.

'No, not exactly. You'll stay here. But *I* cut sticks to-morrow.'

'Sure, then, it's not alone ye'll be goin'. Egor! man, didn't I take me Bible-oath niver to lave ye, the longest day ye lived! Ah—now, don't be talkin'!'

'That's all right, Jerry—but it's got to be that way,' replied The O'Mahony, in low regretful tones. 'I've figured it all out. It'll be mighty tough to go off by myself without you, pard, but I can't leave the thing without somebody to run it for me, and you are the only one that fills the bill. Now don't kick about it, or make a fuss, or think I'm using you bad. Jest say to yourself—"Now he's my friend, an' I'm his'n, and if he says I can be of most use to him here, why that settles it." Take the helm for a minute, Jerry. I want to go for'ard an' say a word to the men.'

The O'Mahony looked down upon the unintelligible game being played with cards so dirty that he could not tell them apart, and worn by years of use to the shape of an egg, and waited with a musing smile on his face till the deal was exhausted. The players and onlookers formed a compact group at his knees, and they still sat or knelt or lounged on the deck as they listened to his words.

'Boys,' he said, in the gravely gentle tone which somehow he had learned in speaking to these men of Muirisc, 'I've been tellin' Jerry somethin' that you've got a right to know too. I'm going' to light out to-morrow—that is, quit Ireland

for a spell. It may be for a good while—maybe not. That depends. I hate like the very devil to go—but it's better for me to skip than to be lugged off to gaol, and then to state's prison—better for me an' better for you. If I get out, the rest of you won't be bothered. Now—hold on a minute till I get through!—now between us we've fixed up Muirisc so that it's a good deal easier to live there than it used to be. There'll be more mines opened up soon, an' the lobster fact'ry an' the fishin' are on a good footin' now. I'm goin' to leave Jerry to keep track o' things, along with O'Daly, an' they'll let me know regular how matters are workin', so you won't suffer by my not bein' here.'

'Ah—thin—it's our hearts 'll be broken entirely wid the grief,' wailed Dominic, and the others, seizing this note of woe as their key, broke forth in a chorus of lamentation.

They scrambled to their feet with uncovered heads, and clustered about him, jostling one another for possession of his hands, and affectionately patting his shoulders and stroking his sleeves, the while they strove to express in their own tongue, or in the poetic phrases they had fashioned for themselves out of a practical foreign language, the sincerity of their sorrow. But the Irish peasant has been schooled through many generations to face the necessity of exile, and to view the breaking of households, the separation of kinsmen, the recurring miseries attendant upon an endless exodus across the seas, with the philosophy of the inevitable. None of these men dreamed of attempting to dissuade The O'Mahony from his purpose, and they listened with melancholy nods of comprehension when he had secured silence, and spoke again.

'You can all see that it's *got* to be,' he said, in conclusion. 'And now I want you to promise me this: I don't expect you'll have trouble with the police. They won't get over from Balleydehob for another day or two—and by that time

I shall be gone, and the *Hen Hawk* too—an' if they bring over the dingey I gave the Englishman to land in, why of course there won't be a man, woman or child in Muirisc that ever laid eyes on it before.'

'Sure, Heaven 'u'd blast the eyes that 'u'd recognise that same boat,' said one, and the others murmured their confidence in the hypothetical miracle.

'Well, then, what I want you to promise is this: That you'll go on as you have been doin', workin' hard, keepin' sober, an' behavin' yourselves, an' that you'll mind what Jerry says, same as if I said it myself. An' more than that—an' now this is a thing I'm specially sot on—that you'll look upon that little gal, Kate O'Mahony, as if she was a daughter of mine, an' watch over her, an' make things pleasant for her, an'—an' treat her like the apple of your eye.'

If there was an apple in the O'Mahony's eyes, it was for the moment hidden in a veil of moisture. The faces of the men and their words alike responded to his emotion.

Then one of them, a lean and unkempt old mariner, who even in this keen February air kept his hairy breast and corded sunburnt throat exposed, and whose hawk-like eyes had flashed through fifty years of taciturnity over heaven knows what wild and fantastic dreams born of the sea, spoke up:

'Sir, by your lave, I'll mesilf be her bodygyard and her servant, and tache her the wather as befits her blood, and keep the very sole of her fut from harrum.'

'Right you are, Murphy,' said The O'Mahony. 'Make that your job.'

No one remembered ever having heard Murphy speak so much at one time before. To the surprise of the group, he had still more to say.

'And, sir—I'd not be askin' it be way of ricompinse,' the

fierce-faced old boatman went on—'but w'u'd your honour grant us wan requist?'

'You've only got to spit 'er out,' was the hearty response.

'Thin, sir, give us over the man ye've got downstairs!'

The O'Mahony's face changed its expression. He thought for a moment; then asked:

'What to do?'

'To dale wid this night!' said Murphy solemnly.

There was a pause of silence, and then the clamour of a dozen eager voices clashing one against the other in the cold wintry twilight:

'Give him over, O'Mahony!' 'Lave him to us!' 'Don't be soilin' yer own hands wid the likes of him!' 'Oh, lave him to us!' these voices pleaded.

The O'Mahony hesitated for a minute, then slowly shook his head.

'No, boys, don't ask it,' he said. 'I'd like to oblige you, but I can't. He's *my* meat—I can't give him up!'

'W'u'd yer honor be for sparin' him, thin?' asked one, with incredulity and surprise.

The O'Mahony of Muirisc looked over the excited group which surrounded him, dimly recognising the strangeness of the weirdly interwoven qualities which run in the blood of Heber—the soft tenderness of nature which through tears would swear loyalty unto death to a little child, shifting on the instant to the ferocity of the wolf-hound burying its jowl in the throat of its quarry. Beyond them were gathering the sea mists, as by enchantment they had gathered ages before with vain intent to baffle the sons of Milesius, and faintly in the half-light lowered the beetling cliffs whereon the O'Mahonys, true sons of those sea-rovers, had crouched watching for their prey this thousand of years. He could almost feel the ancestral taste of blood in *his* mouth as he looked, and thought upon his answer.

‘No, don’t worry about his gitting off,’ he said at last. ‘I’ll take care of that. You’ll never see him again—no one on top of this earth ’ll ever lay eyes on him again.’

With visible reluctance the men forced themselves to accept this compromise. The *Hen Hawk* plunged doggedly along up the bay.

Three hours later, The O’Mahony and Jerry, not without much stumbling and difficulty, reached the strange subterranean chamber where they had found the mummy of the monk. They bore between them the inert body of a man, whose head was enveloped in bandages, and whose hands, hanging limp at arms’ length, were discoloured with the grime and mould from the stony path over which they had dragged. They threw this burden on the mediæval bed, and, drawing long breaths of relief, turned to light some candles in addition to the lantern Jerry had borne, and to kindle a fire on the hearth.

They talked in low murmurs meanwhile. The O’Mahony had told Jerry something of what part Linsky had played in his life. Jerry, without being informed with more than the general outlines of the story, was able swiftly to comprehend his master’s attitude towards the man—an attitude compounded of hatred for his treachery of to-day and gratitude for the services which he had unconsciously performed in the past. He understood to a nicety, too, what possibilities there were in the plan which The O’Mahony now unfolded to him, as the fire began crackling up the chimney.

‘I can answer for his gittin’ over that crack in the head,’ said The O’Mahony, heating and stirring a tin cup full of balsam over the flame. ‘Once I’ve fixed this bandage on, we can bring him to with ammonia and whisky, an’ give him some broth. He’ll live all right—an’ he’ll live right

here, d'ye mind. Whatever else happens, he's never to git outside, an' he's never to know where he is. Nobody but you is to so much as dream of his bein' down here—be as mum as an oyster about it, won't you? You're to have sole charge of him, d'ye see—the only human being he ever lays eyes on.'

'Egor! I'll improve his moind wid grand discourses on trayson and informin' an' betrayin' his oath, and the like o' that, till he'll be fit to die wid shame.'

'No—I dunno—p'raps it'd be better not to let him know *we* know—jest make him think we 're his friends, hidin' him away from the police. However, that can take care o' itself. Say whatever you like to him, only——'

'Only don't lay a hand on him—is it that ye were thinkin'?' broke in Jerry.

'Yes, don't lick him,' said The O'Mahony. 'He's had about the worst bat on the head I ever saw a man git an' live, to start with. No—be decent with him, an' give him enough to eat. Might let him have a moderate amount o' drink, too.'

'I suppose there 'll be a great talk about his vanishin' out o' sight all at wance among the Brotherhood,' suggested Jerry.

'That don't matter a darn,' said the other. 'Jest you go ahead, an' tend to your own knittin', an' let the Brotherhood whistle. We've paid a good stiff price to learn what Fenianism is worth, and we've learned enough. Not any more on my plate, thankee! Jest give the boys the word that the jig is up—that there won't be any more drillin' or meanderin' round generally. And speakin' o' drink——'

A noise from the curtained bed in the alcove interrupted The O'Mahony's remarks upon this important subject. Turning, the two men saw that Linsky had risen on the couch to a half-sitting posture, and, with a tremulous hand,

drawing aside the felt-like draperies, was staring wildly at them out of bloodshot eyes.

‘For the love of God, what is it?’ he asked, in a faint and moaning voice.

‘Lay down there!—quick!’ called out The O’Mahony sternly; and Linsky fell back prone without a protest.

The O’Mahony had finished melting his gum, and he spread it now salve-like upon a cloth. Then he walked over to where the wounded man lay, with marvel-stricken eyes wandering over the archaic vaulted ceiling.

‘Is it dead I am?’ he groaned, with a vacuous glance at the new-comer.

‘No, you’ve been badly hurt in battle,’ said the other in curt tones. ‘We can pull you through, perhaps; but you’ve got to shut up an’ lay still. Hold your head this way a little more—that’s it.’

The injured man submitted to the operation, for the most part, with apparently closed eyes, but his next remark showed that he had been gathering his wits together.

‘And how’s the battle gone, Captain Harrier?’ he suddenly asked. ‘Is Oireland free from the oppressor at last?’

‘No!’ said The O’Mahony, with dry brevity—‘but she’ll be free from *you* for a spell, or I miss *my* guess most consumedly.’

CHAPTER XV.

‘TAKE ME WITH YOU, O’MAHONY!’

THE fair-weather promise of the crimson sunset was not kept. The morning broke bloodshot and threatening, with dark, jagged storm-clouds scudding angrily across the sky, and a truculent unrest moving the waters of the bay to lash out at the rocks, and snarl in rising murmurs among themselves.

Every soul in Muirisc came soon enough to share this disquietude with the elements. Such evil tidings as these, that The O’Mahony was quitting the country, seemed veritably to take to themselves wings. The village, despite the fact that the fishing season had not yet arrived, and that there was nothing else to do, could not lie abed on such a morning, much less sleep. Even the tiniest children, routed out from their nests of straw close beside the chimney by the unwonted bustle, saw that something was the matter.

Mrs. Fergus O’Mahony heard the intelligence at a somewhat later hour, even as she dallied with that second cup of coffee, which, in her own phrase, put a tail to the breakfast. It was brought to her by a messenger from the convent, who came to say that the Ladies of the Hostage’s Tears desired her immediate presence upon an urgent matter.

Mrs. Fergus easily enough put two and two together, as she donned her bonnet and *broché* shawl. It was The O'Mahony's departure that was to be discussed, and the nuns were right in calling *that* important. She looked critically over the irregular walls of the castle, as she passed it on her way to the convent. Here she had been born; here she had lived in peace and plenty, after her brother's death, until the heir from America came to turn her out. Who knew? Perhaps she was to go back again, after all. Mrs. Fergus agreed that the news was highly important.

The first glance which she threw about her, after she had been ushered into the reception-hall, revealed to her that not even she had guessed the full importance of what was toward.

The three nuns sat on their accustomed bench at one side of the fire, and behind them, in his familiar chimney-corner, palsied old Father Harrington lolled and half-dozed over the biscuit he was nibbling to stay his stomach after mass. At the table, before a formidable array of papers, was seated Cormac O'Daly, and at his side sat the person whose polite name seemed to be Diarmid MacEgan, but whom Muirisc knew and delighted in as Jerry. Mrs. Fergus made a mental note of surprise at seeing him seated in such company, and then carried her gaze on to cover the principal personage in the room. It was The O'Mahony, looking very grave and preoccupied, and who stood leaning against the chimney-mantel like a proprietor, who welcomed her with a nod and motioned her to a seat.

It was he, too, who broke the silence which solemnly enveloped the conference.

'Cousin Maggie,' he said, in explanation, to her, 'we've got together this little family party so early in the mornin' for the reason that time is precious. I'm goin' away—for my health—in an hour or two, an' there are things to be

arranged before I go. I may be away for years; maybe I shan't ever come back.'

'Sure the suddenness of it's fit to take one's breath away!' Mrs. Fergus exclaimed, and put her plump white hand to her bosom. 'I've nerves that bad, O'Mahony!' she added.

'Yes, it is a sudden sort of spurt,' he assented.

'And it's your health, you say! Sure, I used to look on you as the mortal picture of a grand, strong man.'

'You can't always tell by looks,' said The O'Mahony gravely. 'But—the point 's this. I'm leaving O'Daly and Jerry here, as sort o' joint bosses of the circus, during my absence. O'Daly is to be ringmaster, so to speak, while Jerry 'll be in the box-office, and kind o' keep an eye to the whole show, generally.'

'I lamint, sir, that I'm not able to congratulate you on the felicity of your mettyphor,' said Cormac O'Daly, whose swart, thin-visaged little face wore an expression more glum than ever.

'At any rate, you git at my meaning. I have signed two powers of attorney, drawn up by O'Daly here as a lawyer, which gives them power to run things for me, while I'm away. Everything is set out in the papers, straight and square. I'm leaving my will, too, with O'Daly, an' that I wanted specially to speak to you about. I've got just one heir in this whole world, an' that's your little gal Katie. P'r'aps it 'll be as well not to say anything to her about it, but I want you all to know. An' I want you an' her to move back into my house, an' live there jest as you did afore I come. I've spoken to Mrs. Sullivan about it—she's as good as a farrow cow in a family—an' she'll stay right along with you, an' look after things. An' Jerry here, he'll see that your wheels are kept greased—financially, I mean—an'—I guess that's about all. Only look out for that little gal o' yours as well as you know how—that's all. An'

I wish—I wish you'd send her over to me, to my house, in half an hour or so—jest to say good-bye.'

The O'Mahony's voice had trembled under the suspicion of a quaver at the end. He turned now abruptly, took up his hat from the table, and left the room, closely followed by Jerry. O'Daly rose as if to accompany them, hesitated for a moment, and then seated himself again.

The mother-superior had heretofore preserved an absolute silence. She bent her glance now upon Mrs. Fergus, and spoke slowly :

'Ah, thin, Margaret O'Mahony,' she said, 'd'ye mind in your day of good fortune that, since the hour you were born, ye've been the child of our prayers and the object of our ceaseless intercessions?'

Mrs. Fergus put out her rounded lower lip a little, and, rising from her chair, walked slowly across to the little cracked mirror on the wall, to run a correcting finger over the scalloped line of her crimps.

'Ay,' she said at last, 'I mind many things bechune me and you—not all of thim prayers either.'

While Mrs. Sullivan and Jerry were hard at work packing the scant wardrobe and meagre personal belongings of the master for his journey, and the greater part of the population of Muirisc stood clustered on the little quay watching the *Hen Hawk*, bemoaning their own impending bereavement and canvassing the incredible good luck of Malachy, who was to be the companion in this voyage to unknown parts—while the wind rose outside, and the waters tumbled, and the sky grew overcast with the sullen menace of a winter storm—The O'Mahony walked slowly, hand in hand with little Kate, through the deserted churchyard.

The girl had been weeping, and the tears still blurred her eyes and stained her red cheeks with wobegone smudges.

She clung to her companion's hand, and pressed her head ever and again against his arm, but words she had none. The man walked with his eyes bent on the ground and his lips tightly closed together. So the two strolled in silence till they passed out from the place of tombs, and, following a path which wound its way in ascent through clumps of budding furze and miniature defiles among the rocks, had gained the summit of the cliff-wall, under whose shelter the hamlet of Muirisc had for ages nestled. Here they halted, looking down upon the gray ruins of castle, church, and convent, upon thatched cottage roofs, the throng on the quay, the breakers' line of foam against the rocks, and the darkened expanse of white-capped waters beyond.

'Don't take on so, Siss, any more, that's a good gal,' said The O'Mahony at last, drawing the child's head to his side and gently stroking her black hair. 'It ain't no good, an' it breaks me all up. One thing I'm glad of—it's going to be rough outside. It seems to me I couldn't 'a' stood it to up an' sail off in smooth, sunshiny weather. The higher she rolls the better I'll like it. It's the same as havin' somethin' to bite on when you've got the toothache.'

Kate, for answer, rubbed her head against his sleeve, but said nothing.

After a long pause he went on: "'Tain't as if I was goin' to be gone for ever and a day. Why, I may be poppin' in any minit, jest when you least expect it. That's why I want you to study your lessons right along every day, so 't when I turn up you'll be able to show off A number one. Maybe you're bankin' on my not bein' able to tell whether your book learnin' is "all wool an' a yard wide" or not. I didn't get much of a show at school, I know. 'Twas "root hog or die" with me when I was a boy. But I'm jest a terror at asking questions. Why, I've busted up whole schools afore now, puttin' conundrums to 'm that even the school-

ma'ams couldn't answer. So you look out for me when I come !'

The gentle effort at cheerfulness bore fruit not after its kind. Kate's little breast began to heave, and she buried her face against his coat.

The O'Mahony looked wistfully down upon the village and the bay, patting the child's shoulder in silent token of sympathy. Then an idea occurred to him. With his finger under her chin, he lifted Kate's face till her glance met his.

'Oh, by the way,' he said, with animation, 'have you got so you can write pritty good?'

The girl nodded her head, and looked away.

'Why, then, look here,' he exclaimed heartily, 'what's the matter with your writin' me real letters, say every few weeks, tellin' me all that's goin' on, an' keepin' me posted right up to date? Why, that's jest splendid! It'll be almost the same as if I wasn't away at all. Eh, won't it, Skee-zucks, eh?'

He playfully put his arm around her shoulder, and they began the descent of the path. The suggestion had visibly helped to lighten her little heart, though she had said not a word.

'Oh, yes,' he went on, 'an' another thing I wanted to say: it ain't a thing that you must ever ask about—or ought to know anything about it—but we went out yisterday an' made fools of ourselves, an' if I hadn't had the luck of a brindled heifer we 'd all been in gaol to-day. Of course, I don't know for certain, but I shouldn't wonder if my luck had something to do with a—what d'ye call it?—yes, *cathach*—that we toted along with us. Well, I'm goin' to turn that box over for you to keep when we git down to the house. I wouldn't open it if I was you—it ain't a pritty sight for a little gal—just a few dead men's bones—but the box itself is all right, an' it can't do you no harm, to say the least.

An', moreover—why, here it is in my pocket—here's a ring we found on his thumb—cur'ous enough—that you must keep for me, too. That makes it like what we read about in the story-books, eh? A ring that the beauteous damsel, with the hay-coloured hair, sends to Alonzo when she gets in trouble, eh, Siss?'

The child took the ring—a quaintly-shaped thin band of gold, with a carved precious stone of golden-brownish hue—and put it in her pocket. Still she said nothing.

At ten in the forenoon, in the presence of all Muirisc, The O'Mahony at last gently pushed his way through the throng of keening old women and excited younger friends, and stepped over the gunwale upon the deck, and Jerry and O'Daly restrained those who would have followed him. He had forced his face into a half-smile, to which he clung resolutely almost to the end. He had offered many parting injunctions: to work hard and drink little; to send the children to school; to keep an absolute silence to all outsiders, whether from Skull, Goleen, Crookhaven, or elsewhere, concerning him and his departure—and many other things. He had shaken hands a hundred times across the narrow bar of water between the boat and pier; and now the men in the dingy out in front had the hawser taut, and the *Hen Hawk* was moving under its strain, when a shrill cry raised itself above the general clamour of lamentation and farewells.

At that moment of the vessel's stirring, little Kate O'Mahony broke from the group in which her mother and the nuns stood dignifiedly apart, and ran wildly to the pier's edge, where Jerry caught, and for the moment held her, struggling, over the widening chasm between the boat and the quay. Her power to speak had come at last.

'Take me with you, O'Mahony!' she cried, fighting like a

wild thing to free herself. ‘Oh, take me with you! You promised! You promised! *Take* me with you!’

It was then that The O’Mahony’s face lost, in a flash, its perfunctory smile. He half stretched out his hand—then swung himself on his heel and marched to the prow of the vessel. He did not look back again upon Muirisc.

* * * * *

An hour later a police-car, bearing five armed men, halted at the point on the mountain-road from Durras where Muirisc comes first in view. The constables, gazing out upon the broad expanse of Dunmanus Bay, saw on the distant water-line a yawl-rigged coasting vessel, white against the stormy sky. Some chance whim suggested to their minds an interest in this craft.

But when they descended into Muirisc they could not find a soul who had the remotest notion of what a yawl-rig meant, much less of the identity of the lugger which, even as they spoke, had passed out of sight.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE LADY OF MUIRISC.

IN the parish of Kilmoe—which they pronounce with a soft prolonged ‘moo-h,’ like the murmuring call of one of their little bright-eyed, black-coated cows—the inhabitants are wont to say that the next parish is America.

It is an ancient and sterile and storm-beaten parish, this Kilmoe, thrust out in expiation of some forgotten sin or other to exist beyond the pale of human companionship. Its sons and daughters, scattered in tiny, isolated hamlets over its barren area, hear never a stranger’s voice—and their own speech is slow and low of tone because the real right to make a noise there belongs to the shrieking gulls and the wild, west wind and the towering, foam-fanged waves which dash themselves, in tireless rivalry with the thunder, against its cliffs.

Slow, too, in growth and ripening are the wits of the men of Kilmoe. They must have gray hairs before they are accounted more than boys; and when, from sheer old age, they totter into the grave, the feeling of the parish is that they have been untimely cut off just as they were beginning to get their brains in fair working order. Very often these

aged men, if they dally and loiter on the way to the tomb in the hope of becoming still wiser, are given a sharp and peremptory push forward by starvation. It would not do for the men of Kilmoe to know too much. If they did, they would all go somewhere else to live—and then what would become of their landlord?

Kilmoe once had a thriving and profitable industry, whereby a larger population than it now contains kept body and soul together in more intimate and comfortable relations than at present exist. The outlay involved in this industry was very small, and the returns, though not governed by any squalid, modern law of percentages, were, on the whole, large.

It was all very simple. Whenever a stormy, wind-swept night set in, the men of Kilmoe tied a lighted lantern on the neck of a cow, and drove the animal to walk along the strand underneath the sea-cliffs. This light, rising and sinking with the movements of the cow, bore a quaint and interesting resemblance to the undulations of an illuminated buoy or boat, rocked on gentle waves; and strange sea-faring crafts bent their course in confidence toward it, until they were undeceived. Then the men of Kilmoe would sally forth, riding the tumbling breakers with great bravery and address in their boats of withes and stretched skin, and enter into possession of all the stranded strangers' goods and chattels. As for such strangers as survived the wreck, they were sometimes sold into slavery; more often they were merely knocked on the head. Thus Kilmoe lived much more prosperously than in these melancholy latter days of dependence upon a precarious potato crop.

In every family devoted to industrial pursuits there is one member who is more distinguished for attention to the business than the others, and upon whom its chief burdens fall. This was true of the O'Mahonys, who for many

centuries controlled and carried on the lucrative occupation above described, on their peninsula of Iveagh. There were branches of the sept stationed in the more inland sea-castles of Rosbrin, Ardintenant, Leamcon and Ballydesmond on the one side, and of Dunbeacon, Dunmanus and Muirisc on the other, who did not expend all their energies upon this, their genuine business, but took many vacations and indefinitely extended holiday trips, for the improvement of their minds and the gratification of their desire to whip the neighbouring O'Driscolls, O'Sullivans, O'Heas and O'Learys out of their boots. The record of these pleasure excursions, in which sometimes the O'Mahonys returned with great booty and the heads of their enemies on pikes, and some other times did not come home at all, fills all the pages of the Psalter of Rosbrin, beside occupying a good deal of space in the Annals of Innisfallen and of the Four Masters, and needs not be enlarged upon here.

But it is evident that that gentleman of the family who, from choice or sense of duty, lived in Kilmoe, must have pursued the legitimate O'Mahony vocation very steadily, without any frivolous interruptions or the waste of time in visiting his neighbours. The truth is that he had no neighbours, and nothing else under the sun with which to occupy his mind but the affairs of the sea. This the observer will readily conclude when he stands upon the promontory marked on the maps as Three-Castle Head, with the whole world-dividing Atlantic at his feet, and looks over at the group of ruined and moss-grown keeps which give the place its name.

'Oh-h! Look there now, Murphy!' cried a tall and beautiful young woman, who stood for the first time on this lofty sea-wall, viewing the sombre line of connected castles. Sure, *here* lived the true O'Mahony of the Coast of White

Foam ! Why, man, what were we at Muirisc but poor crab-catchers compared wid *him* ?

She spoke in a tone of awed admiration, between long breaths of wonderment, and her big eyes of Irish gray glowed from their cover of sweeping lashes with surprised delight. She had taken off her hat—a black straw hat, with a dignifiedly broad brim bound in velvet, and enriched by a plume of the same sombre hue—to save it from the wind, which blew stiffly here ; and this bold sea-wind, nothing loath, frolicked boisterously with her dark curls instead. She put her hand on her companion's shoulder for steadiness, and continued the rapt gaze upon this crumbling haunt of the dead and forgotten sea-lords.

Twelve years had passed since, as a child of eight, Kate O'Mahony had screamed out in despair after the departing *Hen Hawk*. That vessel had never cleft the waters of Dunmanus since, and the fleeting years had converted the memory of its master into a kind of heroic legendary myth, over which the elders brooded fondly, but which the youngsters thought of as something scarcely less remote than the Firbolgs, or the builders of the ' Danes' forts ' on the furze-crowned hills about.

But these same years, though they turned the absent into shadows, had made of Kate a very lovely and complete reality. It would be small praise to speak of her as the most beautiful girl on the peninsula, since there is no other section of Ireland so little favoured in that respect, to begin with, and for the additional reason, that whatever maidenly comeliness there is existent there, is habitually shrouded from view by close-drawn shawls and enveloping hoods, even on the hottest of summer noon-days. For all the stray traveller sees of young and pretty faces in Iveagh, he might as well be in the heart of the veiled Orient.

And even with Kate, potential Lady of Muirisc though

she was, this fashion of a hat was novel. It seemed only yesterday since she had emerged from the chrysalis of girlhood with a shawl over its head, and Heaven only knows what abysses of ignorant shyness and stupid distrust inside that head. And, alas! it seemed but a swiftly on-coming to-morrow before this new freedom was to be lost again, and the hat exchanged forever for a nun's veil.

If Kate had known natural history better, she might have likened her lot to that of the May-fly, which spends two years underground in its larva state hard at work preparing to be a fly, and then, when it at last emerges, lives only for an hour, even if it that long escapes the bill of the swallow or the rude jaws of the trout. No such simile drawn from stony-hearted Nature's tragedies helped her to philosophy. She had, perhaps, a better refuge in the health and enthusiasm of her own youth.

In the company of her ancient servitor Murphy, she was spending the pleasant April days in visiting the various ruins of the O'Mahonys on Iveagh. Many of these she viewed now for the first time, and the delight of this overpowered and kept down in her mind the reflection that perhaps she was seeing them all for the last time as well.

'But how, in the name of glory, did they get up and down to their boats, Murphy?' she asked at last, strolling further out toward the edge to catch the full sweep of the cliff front, which rises abruptly from the beach below, sheer and straight, a clear four hundred feet.

'There's never a nearer landing-place, thin, than where we left our boat, a half-mile beyant here,' said Murphy. 'Faith, miss, 'tis the belafe they went up and down be the aid of the little people. 'Tis well known that on windy nights there do be grand carrin's-on hereabouts. Sure, in the lake forninst us it was that Kian O'Mahony saw the enchanted woman with the shape on her of a horse, and

died of the sight. Manny's the time me own father related to me that same.'

'Oh, true ; that *would* be the lake of the legend,' said Kate. 'Let us go down to it, Murphy. I'll dip me hand for wance in water that's been really bewitched.'

The girl ran lightly down the rolling side of the hill, and across the rock-strewn hollows and mounds which stretched toward the castellated cliff. The base of the third and most inland tower was washed by a placid fresh-water pond, covering an area of several acres, and heavily fringed at one end with rushes. As she drew near a heron suddenly rose from the reeds, hung awkwardly for a moment with its long legs dangling in the air, and then began a slow, heavy flight seaward. On the moment Kate saw another even more unexpected sight—the figure of a man on the edge of the lake, with a gun raised to his shoulder, its barrel following the heron's clumsy course. Involuntarily she uttered a little warning shout to the bird, then stood still, confused and blushing. Stiff-jointed old Murphy was far behind.

The stranger had heard her, if the heron had not. He lowered his weapon, and for a woment gazed wonderingly across the water at this unlooked-for apparition. Then, with his gun under his arm, he turned and walked briskly toward her. Kate cast a searching glance backward for Murphy in vain, and her intuitive movement to draw a shawl over her head was equally fruitless. The old man was still somewhere behind the rocks, and she had only this citified hat, and even that not on her head. She could see that the advancing sportsman was young and a stranger.

He came up close to where she stood, and lifted his cap for an instant in an off-hand way. Viewed thus nearly, he was very young, with a bright, fresh-coloured face and the bearing and clothes of a gentleman.

'I'm glad you stopped me, now that I think of it,' he said, with an easy readiness of speech. 'One has no business to shoot that kind of bird ; but I'd been lying about here for hours, waiting for something better to turn up, till I was in a mood to bang at anything that came along.'

He offered this explanation with a nonchalant half-smile, as if confident of its prompt acceptance. Then his face took on a more serious look, as he glanced a second time at her own flushed countenance.

'I hope I haven't been trespassing,' he added, under the influence of this revised impression.

Kate was, in truth, frowning at him, and there were no means by which he could guess that it was the effect of nervous timidity rather than vexation.

'Tis not my land,' she managed to say at last, and looked again for Murphy.

'No—I didn't think it was anybody's land,' he remarked, essaying another propitiatory smile. 'They told me at Goleen that I could shoot as much as I liked. They didn't tell me, though, that there was nothing to shoot.'

The young man clearly expected conversation ; and Kate, stealing further flash-studies at his face, began to be conscious that his manner and talk were not especially different from those of any nice girl of her own age. She tried to think of something amiable to say.

'Tis not the sayson for annything worth shooting,' she said, and then wondered if it was an impertinent remark.

'I know that,' he replied. 'But I've nothing else to do just at the moment, and you can keep yourself walking better if you've got a gun ; and then, of course, in a strange country there's always the chance that something curious *may* turn up to shoot. Fact is, I didn't care so much after all whether I shot anything or not. You see, castles are

new things to me—we don't grow 'em where I come from—and it's fun to me to mouse around among the stones and walls, and so on. But this is the wildest and loneliest thing I've run up against yet. I give you my word, I'd been lying here so long, watching those mildewed old towers there, and wondering what kind of folks built 'em and lived in 'em, that when I saw you galloping down the rocks here—upon my word, I half thought it was all a fairy story. You know the poor people really believe in that sort of thing here. Several of them have told me so.'

Kate actually felt herself smiling upon the young man.

'I'm afraid you can't always believe all they relate,' she said. 'Some of them have deludthering ways with strangers—not that they mane anny harm by it, poor souls!'

'But a young man down below here to-day,' continued the other—'mind you, a *young* man—told me solemnly that almost every night he heard with his own ears the shindy kicked up by the ghosts on the hill back of his house, you know, inside one of those ringed Danes' forts, as they call 'em. He swore to it, honest Injun.'

The girl started in spite of herself, stirred vaguely by the sound of this curious phrase with which the young man had finished his remarks. But nothing definite took shape in her thoughts concerning it, and she answered him freely enough:

'Ah, well, I'll not say he intinded desate. They're a poetic people, sir, living here alone among the ruins of what was wance a grand country, and now is what you see it, and they imagine visions to themselves. 'Tis in the air, here. Sure, you yourself'—she smiled again as she spoke—'credited me with being a fairy. Of course,' she added hastily, 'you had in mind the legend of the lake, here.'

'How do you mean—legend?' asked the young man, in frank ignorance.

'Sure, here in these very waters is a woman, with the shape of a horse, who appears to people, and when they see her, they—they die, that's all.'

'Well, that's a good deal, I should think,' he responded lightly. 'No, I hadn't heard of that before; and, besides, you—why, you came down the hill, there, skipping like a lamb on the mountains, not a bit like a horse.'

The while Kate turned this comparison over in her mind to judge whether she liked it or not, the young man shifted his gun to his shoulder, as if to indicate that the talk had lasted long enough. Then she swiftly blamed herself for having left this signal to him.

'I'll not be keeping you,' she said hurriedly.

'Oh, bless you—not at all!' he protested. 'Only I was afraid I was keeping *you*. You see, time hangs pretty heavy on my hands just now, and I'm tickled to death to have anybody to talk to. Of course, I like to go around looking at these castles here, because the chances are that some of my people some time or other helped build 'em. I know my father was born somewhere in this part of County Cork.'

Kate sniffed at him.

'Manny thousands of people have been born here,' she said, with dignity; 'but it doesn't follow that they had annything to do with these castles.'

The young man attached less importance to the point.

'Oh, of course not,' he said carelessly. 'All I go by is the probability that, way back somewhere, all of us O'Mahonys were related to one another. But for that matter, so were all the Irish who——'

'And are *you* an O'Mahony, thin?'

Kate was looking at him with shining eyes, and he saw now that she was much taller and more beautiful than he had thought before.

‘That’s my name,’ he said simply.

‘An O’Mahony of West Carbery?’

‘Well, personally I’m an O’Mahony of Houghton County, Michigan, but my father was from around here somewhere.’

‘Do you hear that, Murphy?’ she said, instinctively turning to the faithful companion of all her out-of-door life. But there was no Murphy in sight.

Kate stared blankly about her for an instant before she remembered that Murphy had never rejoined her at the lakeside. And now she thought she could hear some vague sound of calling in the distance, rising above the continuous crash of the breakers down below.

‘Oh, something has happened to him!’ she cried, and started running wildly back again. The young man followed close enough to keep her in sight, and at a distance of some three hundred yards came up to her as she knelt beside the figure of an old peasant seated with his back against a rock.

Something *had* happened to Murphy. His ankle had turned on a stone, and he could not walk a step.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE OLD BOATMAN KEPT HIS VOW.

‘OH, what’s to be done *now*?’ asked Kate, rising to her feet and casting a puzzled look about her. ‘Sure, me wits are abroad entirely.’

No answer seemed forthcoming. As far inland as the eye could stretch, even to the gray crown of Dunkelly, no sign of human habitation was to be discerned. The jutting headland of the Three Castles on which she stood—with the naked primeval cliffs; the roughly scattered boulders framed in scrub-furze too stunted and frightened in the presence of the sea to venture upon blossoms; the thin ashen-green grass blown flat to earth in the little sheltered nooks where alone its roots might live—presented the grimmest picture of desolation she had ever seen. An undersized sheep had climbed the rocks to gaze upon the intruders—an animal with fleece of such a snowy whiteness that it looked like an imitation baa-baa from a toy-shop—and Kate found herself staring into its vacuous face with sympathy, so helplessly empty was her own mind of suggestions.

‘’Tis two Oirish miles to the nearest house,’ said Murphy, in a despondent tone.

Kate turned to the young man, and spoke wistfully :

‘If you’ll stop here, I’ll go for help,’ she said.

The young man from Houghton County laughed aloud.

‘If there’s any going to be done, I guess you’re not the one that’ll do it,’ he answered. ‘But, first of all, let’s see exactly where we stand. How did you come here, anyhow?’

‘We rowed around from—from our home—a long way distant in that direction,’ pointing vaguely toward Dunmanus Bay, ‘and our boat was left there at the nearest landing point, half a mile from here.’

‘Ah, well, *that’s* all right,’ said the young man. ‘It would take an hour to get anybody over here to help, and that would be clean waste of time, because we don’t need any help. I’ll just tote him over on my back, all by my little self.’

‘Ah—you’d never try to do the likes of *that*!’ deprecated the girl.

‘Why not?’ he commented cheerfully—and then, with a surprise which checked further protest, she saw him tie his game-bag round his waist so that it hung to the knee, get Murphy seated up on the rock against which he had leaned, and then take him bodily on his back, with the wounded foot comfortably upheld and steadied inside the capacious leathern pouch.

‘Why not, eh?’ he repeated, as he straightened himself easily under the burden; ‘why he’s as light as a bag of feathers. That’s one of the few advantages of living on potatoes. Now, you bring along the gun—that’s a good girl—and we’ll fetch up at the boat in no time. You do the steering, Murphy. Now, then, here we go!’

The sombre walls of the Three Castles looked down in silence upon this strange procession as it filed past under their shadows—and if the gulls which wheeled above and about the moss-grown turrets described the spectacle later

to the wraiths of the dead-and-gone O'Mahonys and to the enchanted horse-shaped woman in the lake, there must have been a general agreement that the parish of Kilmoe had seen never such another sight before, even in the days of the mystic Tuatha de Danaan.

The route to the boat abounded to a disheartening degree in rough and difficult descents, and even more trying was the frequent necessity for long *détours* to avoid impossible barriers of rock. Moreover, Murphy turned out to be vastly heavier than he had seemed at the outset. Hence the young man, who had freely enlivened the beginning of the journey with affable chatter, gradually lapsed into silence; and at last, when only a final ridge of low hills separated them from the strand, confessed that he would like to take off his coat. He rested for a minute or two after this had been done, and wiped his wet brow.

'Who'd think the sun could be so hot in April?' he said. 'Why, where I come from, we've just begun to get through sleighing.'

'What is it you'd be slaying now?' asked Kate innocently. 'We kill our pigs in the late autumn.'

The young man laughed aloud as he took Murphy once more on his back.

'Potato-bugs, chiefly,' was his enigmatic response.

She pondered fruitlessly upon this for a brief time, as she followed on with the gun and coat. Then her thoughts centred themselves once more upon the young stranger himself, who seemed only a boy to look at, yet was so stout and confident of himself, and had such a man's way of assuming control of things, and doing just what he wanted to do and what needed to be done.

Muirisc did not breed that sort of young man. He could not, from his face, be more than three or four and

twenty—and at that age all the men she had known were mere slow-witted, shy and awkward louts of boys, whom their fathers were quite free to beat with a stick, and who never dreamed of doing anything on their own mental initiative, except possibly to ‘boo’ at the police or throw stones through the windows of a boycotted shop. Evidently there were young men in the big unknown outside world who differed immeasurably from this local standard.

Oh, that wonderful outside world, which she was never going to see! She knew that it was sinful and godless and pressed down and running over with abominations, because the venerable nuns of the Hostage’s Tears had from the beginning told her so, but she was conscious of a new and less hostile interest in it, all the same, since it produced young men of this novel type. Then she began to reflect that he was like Robert Emmet, who was the most modern instance of a young man which the limits of convent literature permitted her to know about, only his hair was cut short, and he was fair, and he smiled a good deal, and——

And lo, here they were at the boat! She woke abruptly from her musing day-dream.

The tide had gone out somewhat, and left the dingey stranded on the dripping sea-weed. The young man seated Murphy on a rock, untied the game-bag and put on his coat, and then in the most matter-of-fact way tramped over the slippery ooze to the boat, pushed it off into the water, and towed it around by the chain to the edge of a little cove, whence one might step over its side from a shore of clean, dry sand. He then, still as if it were all a matter of course, lifted Murphy and put him in the bow of the boat, and asked Kate to sit in the stern and steer.

‘I can talk to you, you know, now that you’re sitting there,’ he said, with his foot on the end of the oar-seat,

after she had taken the place indicated. 'Oh—wait a minute! We were forgetting the gun and bag.'

He ran lightly back to where these things lay upon the strand, and secured them; then, turning, he discovered that Murphy had scrambled over to the middle seat, taken the oars, and pushed the boat off. Suspecting nothing, he walked briskly back to the water's edge.

'Shove her in a little,' he said, 'and I'll hold her while you get back again into the bow. You mustn't think of rowing, my good man.'

But Murphy showed no sign of obedience. He kept his burnt, claw-shaped hands clasped on the motionless, dipped oars, and his eager, bird-like eyes fastened upon the face of his young mistress. As for Kate, she studied the bottom of the boat with intentness, and absently stirred the water over the boat-side with her finger-tips.

'Get her in, man! Don't you hear?' called the stranger, with a shadow of impatience, over the six or seven feet of water which lay between him and the boat. 'Or *you* explain it to him,' he said to Kate; 'perhaps he doesn't understand me—tell him I'm going to row!'

In response to this appeal, Kate lifted her head, and hesitatingly opened her lips to speak—but the gaunt old boatman broke in upon her confused silence:

'Ah, thin—I understand well enough,' he shouted excitedly, 'an' I'm thankful to ye, an' the longest day I live I'll say a prayer for ye—an' sure ye're a foine grand man, every inch of ye, glory be to the Lord—an' it's not manny w'u'd a' done what ye did this day—and the blessin' of the Lord rest on ye; but '—here he suddenly dropped his high, shrill, swift-chasing tones, and added in quite another voice—'if it's the same to you, sir, we'll go along home as we are.'

'What nonsense!' retorted the young man. 'My time

doesn't matter in the least—and you're not fit to row a mile—let alone a long distance.'

'It's not wid me fut I'll be rowin',' replied Murphy, rounding his back for a sweep of the oars.

'Can't *you* stop him, miss—eh—young lady!' the young man implored from the sands.

Hope leaped up in his breast at sight of the look she bent upon Murphy, as she leaned forward to speak—and then sank into plumbless depths. Perhaps she had said something—he could not hear, and it was doubtful if the old boatman could have heard either—for on the instant he had laid his strength on the oars, and the boat had shot out into the bay like a skater over the glassy ice.

It was a score of yards away before the young man from Houghton County caught his breath. He stood watching it—be it confessed—with his mouth somewhat open and blank astonishment written all over his ruddy, boyish face. Then the flush upon his pink cheeks deepened, and a sparkle came into his eyes, for the young lady in the boat had risen and turned toward him, and was waving her hand to him in friendly salutation. He swung the empty game-bag wildly about his head in answer, and then the boat darted out of view behind a jutting ridge of umber rocks, and he was looking at an unbroken expanse of gently heaving water—all crystals set on violet satin, under the April sun.

He sent a long-drawn sighing whistle of bewilderment after the vanished vision.

Not a word had been exchanged between the two in the boat until after Kate, yielding at the last moment to the temptation which had beset her from the first, waved that unspoken farewell to her new acquaintance and saw him a moment later abruptly cut out of the picture by the intervening rocks. Then she sat down again and fastened a

glare of metallic disapproval, so to speak, upon Murphy. This, however, served no purpose, since the boatman kept his head sagaciously bent over his task, and rowed away like mad.

'I take shame for you, Murphy!' she said at last, with a voice as full of mingled anguish and humiliation as she could manage to make it.

'Is it too free I am wid complete strangers?' asked the guileful Murphy, with the face of a trusting babe.

''Tis the rudest and most thankless old man in all West Carbery that ye are!' she answered sharply.

'Luk at that now!' said Murphy, apparently addressing the handles of his oars. 'An' me havin' the intintion to burr'n two candles for him this very night!'

'Candles is it! Murphy, once for all, 'tis a bad trick ye have of falling to talking about candles and "Hail Marys" and such holy matters, whinever ye feel yourself in a corner—and be sure the saints like it no better than I do!'

The aged servitor rested for a moment upon his oars, and, being conscious that evasion was of no further use, allowed an expression of frankness to dominate his withered and weather-tanned face.

'Well, miss,' he said, 'an' this is the truth I'm tellin' ye —'t was not fit that he should be sailin' in the boat wid you.'

Kate tossed her head impatiently.

'And how long are you my director in—in such matters as these, Murphy?' she asked with irony.

The old man's eyes glistened with the emotions which a sudden swift thought conjured up.

'How long?' he asked, with dramatic effect. 'Sure, the likes of me c'u'd be no directhor at all—but 'tis a dozen years since I swore to his honour, The O'Mahony himself, that I'd watch over ye, an' protect ye, an' keep ye from the lightest

breath of harr'm—an' whin I meet him, whether it be the Lord's will in this world or the nixt, I'll go to him an' I'll take off me hat, 'an I'll say: "Yer honour, what old Murphy putt his word to that same he kept!" An' is it you, Miss Katie, that remimbers him that well, that 'ud be blamin' me for that same?"

'I don't know if I'm so much blaming you, Murphy,' said Kate, much softened by both the matter and the manner of this appeal; 'but 'tis different with this young man, himself an O'Mahony by name.'

'Faith, be the same token, 'tis manny thousands of O'Mahonys there are in foreign parts, I'm tould, an' more thousands of 'em here at home; an' if it's for rowin' 'em all on Dunmanus Bay ye'd be, on the score of their name, 'tis grand new boats we'd want.'

Kate smiled musingly.

'Did you mind, Murphy,' she asked, after a pause, 'how like the sound of his speech was to The O'Mahony's?'

'That I did not!' said Murphy conclusively.

'Ah, ye've no ears, man! I was that flurried at the time I couldn't think what it was; but now, whin it comes back to me, it was like talking to The O'Mahony himself. There was that one word, "onistinjun," that The O'Mahony had forever on his tongue. Surely you noticed that!'

'All Americans say that same,' Murphy explained carelessly. "'Tis well known most of 'em are discinded from the Injuns. 'Tis that they mane.'

It did not occur to Kate to question this bold ethno philological proposition. She leant back in her seat at the stern, absent-mindedly toying with the ribbons of her hat, and watching the sky over Murphy's head.

'Poor, dear old O'Mahony!' she sighed at last.

'Amin to that, miss!' murmured the boatman, between strokes.

'Tis a year an' more now, Murphy, since we had the laste sign in the world from him. Ah, *wirra!* I'm beginnin' to be afraid 'tis dead he is !'

'Keep your heart, miss ; keep your heart !' crooned the old boatman, in what had been for months a familiar phrase on his lips. 'Sure no mortal man ever stepped fut on green sod that 'ud take more killin' than our O'Mahony. Why, *coleen asthore*, wasn't he foightin' wid the French against the Prooshians, an' thin wid the Turkeys against the Rooshians, an' bechune males, as ye'd say, didn't he bear arms in Spain for the Catholic king, like the thunderin' rare old O'Mahony that he is, an' did ever so much as a scratch come to him—an' him killin' and destroyin' thim by hundreds? Ah, rest aisy about *him*, Miss Katie !'

The two had long since exhausted, in their almost daily talks, every possible phase of this melancholy subject. It was now April of 1879, and the last word received from the absent chief had been a hastily scrawled note despatched from Adrianople on New Year's Day of 1878, when the Turkish army, beaten finally at Plevna and decimated in the Schipka, were doggedly moving backward toward the Bosphorus. Since that there had been absolute silence, and Kate and Murphy had alike, hoping against hope, come long since to fear the worst. Though each strove to sustain confidence in the other, there was no secret between their hearts as to what both felt.

'Murphy,' said Kate, rousing herself all at once from her reverie, 'there's something I've been keeping from you, and I can't hold it anny longer. Do ye mind when Malachy wint away last winter?'

'Faith I do,' replied the boatman. (Malachy, be it explained, had followed The O'Mahony in all his wanderings up to the autumn of 1870, when, in a skirmish shortly after Sedan, he had lost an arm, and, upon his release from the

hospital, had been sent back to Muirisc.) 'I mind that he wint to Amerriky.'

'Well, thin,' whispered Kate, bending forward as if the very waves had ears, 'it's just that he didn't do. I gave him money, and I gave him The O'Mahony's ring, and sint him to search the world over till he came upon his master or his master's grave; and I charged him to say only this: "Come back to Muirisc! 'Tis Kate O'Mahony wants you!" And now no one knows this but me confessor and you.'

The boatman gazed earnestly into her face.

'An' why for did ye say: "Come back"?' he asked.

'Ah, thin—well—'tis O'Daly's hard dalin's wid the tinants, and the failure of the potatoes these two years and worse ahead, and the birth of me little stepbrother—and——'

'Answer me now, Katie darlint,' the old man adjured her, with glowing eyes and solemn voice. 'Is it the convint ye're afraid of for yoursilf? Is it of your own free will you're goin' to take your vows?'

The girl had answered this question more than once before, and readily enough. Now, for some reason which she could not have defined to herself, she looked down upon the gliding water at her side, and meditatively dipped her fingers into it, and let a succession of little waves fling their crests up into her sleeve—and said nothing at all.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT O'DALY USURPATION.

THE stern natural law of mutability—of ceaseless growth, change, and decay—which the big, bustling, preoccupied outside world takes so indifferently as a matter of course, finds itself reduced to a bare minimum of influence in such small, remote and out-of-the-way places as Muirisc. The lapse of twelve years here had made the scantest and most casual of marks upon the village and its inhabitants. Positively no one worth mentioning had died—for even snuffy and palsied old Father Harrington, though long since replaced at the convent by a younger priest, was understood to be still living on in the shelter of some retreat for aged clergymen in Kerry or Clare. The three old nuns were still the sole ladies of the Hostage's Tears, and, like the rest of Muirisc, seemed only a trifle the more wrinkled and worn under this flight of time.

Such changes as had been wrought had come in a leisurely way, without attracting much attention. The mines, both of copper and of pyrites, had prospered beyond the experience of any other section of Munster, and this had brought into the immediate district a considerable alien population. But these intrusive strangers had fortunately preferred to settle in another hamlet in the neighbourhood,

and came rarely to Muirisc. The village was still without a hotel, and had by this time grown accustomed to the existence within its borders of a constabulary barracks. Its fishing went forward sedately and without much profit; the men of Muirisc only half believed the stories they heard of the modern appliances and wonderful hauls at Baltimore and Crookhaven, and cared even less than they credited. The lobster-canning factory had died a natural death years before, and the little children of Muirisc, playing about within sight of its roofless and rotting timbers, avoided closer contact with the building under some vague and formless notion that it was unlucky. The very idea that there had once been a man who thought that Muirisc desired to put up lobsters in tins seemed to them comic, and almost impious as well.

But there was one alteration upon which the people of Muirisc bestowed a good deal of thought, and on occasion and under their breath, not a few bitter words.

Cormac O'Daly, whom all the elders remembered as a mere 'pote' and man of business for the O'Mahonys, had suddenly in his old age blossomed forth as The O'Daly and as master of Muirisc. Like many other changes which afflict human recollection, this had all come about by reason of a woman's vain folly. Mrs. Fergus O'Mahony, having vainly cast alluring glances upon successive relays of mining contractors and superintendents, and of fish-buyers from Bristol and the Isle of Man, and even, in the later stages, upon a sergeant of police, had at last actually thrown herself in marriage at the grizzled head of the hereditary bard. It cannot be said that the announcement of this ill-assorted match had specially surprised the good people of Muirisc. They had always felt that Mrs. Fergus would ultimately triumph in her matrimonial resolutions, and the choice of O'Daly, though obviously enough a last resort, did not

shock their placid minds. It was rather satisfactory than otherwise, when they came to think of it, that the arrangement should not involve the introduction of a stranger—perhaps even of an Englishman.

But now, after nearly three years of this marriage, with a young O'Daly already big enough to walk by himself among the pigs and geese in the square, they said to themselves that even an Englishman would have been better, and they bracketed the connubial tendencies of Mrs. Fergus and the upstart ambition of Cormac under a common ban of curses.

O'Daly had no sooner been installed in the castle than he had raised the rents. Back had come the odious charge for turf-cutting, the tax on the carrigeens and the tithe-levy upon the gathered kelp. In the best of times these impositions would have been sorely felt; the cruel failure of the potatoes in 1877 and 1878 had elevated them into the domain of the tragic.

For the first time in its history Muirisc had witnessed evictions. Half-way up the cliff stood the walls of four cottages, from which the thatched roofs had been torn by a sheriff's posse of policemen during the bleakest month of winter. The gloomy spectacle, familiar enough elsewhere throughout Ireland, had still the fascination of novelty in the eyes of Muirisc. The villagers could not keep their gaze from those gaunt, deserted walls. Some of the evicted people—those who were too old or too young to get off to America and yet too hardy to die—still remained in the neighbourhood, sleeping in the ditches, and subsisting upon the poor charity of the cottagers round about. The sight of their skulking, half-clad forms and hunger-pinched faces filled Muirisc with wrathful humiliation.

Almost worse still were the airs which latterly O'Daly had come to assume. Even if the evictions and the rack-renting

could have been forgiven, Muirisc felt that his calling himself The O'Daly was unpardonable. Everybody in Iveagh knew that the O'Dalys had been mere bards and singers for the McCarthys, the O'Mahonys, and other Eugenic houses, and had not been above taking service, later on, under the hated Carews. That any scion of the sept should exalt himself now, in the shoes of an O'Mahony, was simply intolerable.

In proportion as Cormac waxed in importance, his coadjutor Jerry had diminished. There was no longer any talk heard about Diarmid MacEgan; the very pigs in the street knew him now to be plain Jerry Higgins. Not even the most shadowy pretence of authority to intermeddle in the affairs of the estate remained to him. Unlettered good-nature and loyalty had stood no chance whatever against the will and powers of the educated Cormac. Muirisc did indeed cherish a nebulous idea that some time or other the popular discontent would find him an effective champion, but Jerry did nothing whatever to encourage this hope. He had grown stout and red-faced through these unoccupied years, and lived by himself in a barely habitable nook among the ruins of the castle, overlooking the churchyard. Here he spent a great deal of his time, behind barred doors and denying himself to all visitors—and Muirisc had long since concluded that the companion of his solitude was a bottle.

'I've a word more to whisper into your ear, Higgins,' said O'Daly, this very evening, at the conclusion of some unimportant conversation about the mines.

The supper had been cleared away, and a tray of glasses flanking a decanter stood on the table at which the speaker sat with his pipe. The buxom and rubicund Mrs. Fergus—for so Muirisc still thought and spoke of her—dozed comfortably in her arm-chair at one side of the bank of

blazing peat on the hearth, an open novel turned down on her lap. Opposite her mother Kate sat and sewed in silence the while the men talked. It was the room in which The O'Mahony had eaten his first meal in Muirisc, twelve years before.

'A word to whisper,' repeated O'Daly, glancing at Jerry with severity from under his beetling black brows, and speaking so loudly that even Mrs. Sullivan in the kitchen might have heard. 'Times is that hard, and work so scarce, that bechune now and midsummer I'd have ye look about for a new place.'

Jerry stared across the table at his co-trustee in blank amazement. It was no surprise to him to be addressed in tones of harsh dislike by O'Daly, or to see his rightful claims to attention contemptuously ignored. But this sweeping suggestion took his breath away.

'What place do ye mane?' he asked confusedly. 'Where else in Muirisc c'u'd I live so aisily?'

'Tis not needful ye should live in Muirisc at all,' said O'Daly, with cold-blooded calmness. 'Sure, 'tis manny years since ye were of anny service here. A lad at two shillings the week would more than replace ye. In these bad times, and worse comin', 'tis impossible ye should stay on here as ye've been doin' these twelve years. I thought I'd tell ye in sayson, Higgins—not to take ye unawares.'

'Glory-be-to-the-world!' gasped Jerry, sitting upright in his chair, and staring open-eyed.

'Tis a dale of other alterations I have in me mind,' O'Daly went on hurriedly. 'Sure, things have stuck in the mire far too long, waiting for the comin' to life of a dead man. 'Tis to stir 'em up I will now, an' no delay. Me step-daughter there takes the veil in a few days, an' 'tis me intintion thin to rebuild large parts of the convint, an' make new rules for it whereby gerrels of me own family can be

free to enter it as well as the O'Mahonys. For, sure, 'tis now well known and universally consaded that the O'Dalys were the most intellectual an' intilligent family in all the two Munsters, be rayson of which all the ignorant an' uncultivated ruffians like the MacCarthys and the O'Mahonys used to be beseechin' 'em to make verses and write books an' divert 'em wid playin' on the harp—an' 'tis high time the O'Dalys came into their own again, the same that they'd never lost but for their wake good-nature in consintin' to be bards on account of their supayrior education. Why, man,' the swart-visaged little lawyer went on, his black eyes snapping with excitement, 'what d'ye say to me great ancesthor, Cuchonnacht O'Daly, called *na Sgoile*, or "of the school," who died at Clonard—rest his soul!—anno Domini 1139, the most celebrated pote of all Oireland? An' do ye mind them eight-an'-twinty other O'Dalys in rigular descint who achaved distinchtion——'

'Egor! If they were all such thieves of the earth as yoursilf, the world's damned well rid of 'em!' burst in Jerry Higgins.

He had sprung to his feet, and stood now, hot-faced and with clenched fists, glaring down upon O'Daly.

The latter pushed back his chair, and instinctively raised an elbow to guard his head.

'Have a care, Higgins!' he shouted out. 'You're in the presence of witnesses. I'm a paycable man—in me own domicile, too!'

'I'll "dommycille" ye, ye blagyard!' Jerry snorted, throwing his burly form half over the table.

'Ah, thin, Jerry! Jerry!' A clear, bell-toned voice rang in his confused ears, and he felt the grasp of a vigorous hand upon his arm. 'Is it mad ye are, Jerry, to think of striking the likes of him?'

Kate stood at his side. The mere touch of her hand on

his sleeve would have sufficed for restraint, but she gripped his arm sharply and turned upon him a gaze of stern reproof.

'Tis elsewhere you've left your manners, Jerry,' she said, in a calm enough voice, though her bosom was heaving. 'When our bards became insolent or turned rogues they were sent outside to be beaten. 'Twas never done in the presence of ladies.'

Jerry's puzzled look showed how utterly he failed to grasp her meaning. There was no such perplexity in O'Daly's mind. He, too, had risen, and stood on the hearth beside his wife, who blinked vacuous inquiries sleepily at the various members of the group in turn.

'And *we*,' he said, with nervous asperity, 'when our children become impertinent, we trounce them off to their bed.'

'Ah-h! No child of yours, O'Daly!' the girl made scornful answer, in measured tones.

'Well, thin,' the little man snarled vehemently, 'while ye're under my roof, Miss O'Mahony, ye'll heed what I say, an' be ruled by 't. An' now ye force me to 't, mark this: I'll have no more of your gaddin' about with that old bag-o'-bones of a Murphy. 'Tis not dacint or fittin' for a young lady—more especially when she's to be a religious—wanderin' the Lord knows where, or——'

Kate broke in upon his harangue with shrill laughter, half hysterical.

'Is it an O'Daly that I hear discoursin' on dacency to an O'Mahony!' she called out, ironically incredulous. 'Well, thin—while that I'm under your roof——'

'Egor! Who made it his roof?' demanded Jerry. 'Shure, be the papers The O'Mahony wrote out wid his own hand for us——'

'Don't be interruptin', Jerry!' said Kate, again with a

restraining hand on his arm. 'I say this, O'Daly: The time I stop under this roof will be just that while it takes me to put on me hat. Not an instant longer will I stay.'

She walked proudly erect to the chest in the corner, took up her hat and put it on her head.

'Come, now, Jerry,' she said, 'I'll walk with you to me cousins, the Ladies of the Hostage's Tears. 'Twill be grand news to thim that the O'Dalys have come into *their own* again!'

Cormac O'Daly instinctively moved toward the door to bar her egress. Then a glance at Jerry's heavy fists and angered face bred intuition of a different kind, and he stepped back again.

'Mind, once for all! I'll not have ye here ag'in—neither one or other of ye!' he shouted.

Kate disdained response by even so much as a look. She moved over to the arm-chair, and, stooping for an instant, lightly brushed with her lips the flattened crimps which adorned the maternal forehead. Then, with head high in air and a tread of exaggerated stateliness, she led the way for Jerry out of the room and the house.

Mrs. Fergus heard the front door close with a resounding clang, and the noise definitely awakened her. She put up a correcting hand, and passed it over her front hair. Then she yawned meditatively at the fire, and, lifting the steaming kettle from the crane, filled one of the glasses on the tray with hot water. Then she permitted herself a drowsy half-smile at the disordered appearance presented by her infuriated spouse.

'Well, thin, 'tis not in Mother Agnes O'Mahony's shoes I'm wishin' *myself*!' she said, upon reflection. 'It's right ye are to build thick new walls to the convint. They'll be needed, wid that girl inside!'

CHAPTER IV.

A BARGAIN WITH THE BURIED MAN.

THOUGH by daylight there seemed to lie but a step of space between the ruined Castle of Muirisc and the portal of the Convent of the Hostage's Tears, it was different under the soft, starlit sky of this April evening. The way was long enough, at all events, for the exchange of many views between Kate and Jerry.

'Tis flat robbery he manes, Jerry,' the girl said, as the revolted twain passed out together under the gateway. 'With me safe in the convent, sure he's free to take every thing for his son—me little stepbrother—and thin there's an ind to the O'Mahonys, here where they've been lords of the coast an' the mountains an' the castles since before St. Patrick's time—an', luk ye! an O'Daly comes in! I'm fit to tear out me eyes to keep them from the sight!'

'But, Miss Katie,' put in Jerry eagerly, 'I've a thought in me head—Egor! The O'Mahony himself put writin' to paper, statin' how every blessed thing was to be yours, the day he sailed away. Sure 'twas meself was witness to that same, along wid O'Daly an' your mother an' the nuns. To-morrow I'll have the law on him!'

'Ah, Jerry,' the girl sighed and shook her head; 'ye've

a good heart, but it's only grief ye'll get tryin' to match your wits against O'Daly's. What do *you* know about papers an' documents, an' the like of that, compared with him? Why, man, he's an attorney himself! 'Tis him that putts the law on other people—worse luck!

'An' him that usen't to have a word for annything but the praises of the O'Mahonys!' exclaimed Jerry, lost once more in surprise at the scope of O'Daly's ambitions.

'I, for one, never thrustud him!' said Kate, with emphasis. 'Twas not in nature that anny man could be that humble an' devoted to a family that wasn't his own, as he pretended.'

'Well, I dunno,' began Jerry hesitatingly; 'tis my belafe he mint honest enough, till that boy o' his was born. A childless man is one thing, an' a father's another. 'Tis that boy that's turnin' O'Daly's head.'

Kate's present mood was intolerant of philosophy. 'Faith, Jerry,' she said, with sharpness, 'tis *my* belafe that if wan was to abuse the divil in your hearin', you'd say: "At anny rate, he has a fine, grand tail."'

Jerry's round face beamed in the vague starlight with a momentary smile. 'Ah, thin, Miss Katie!' he said, in gentle deprecation. Then, as upon a hasty afterthought: 'Egor! I'll talk with Father Jago!'

'Ye'll do nothing of the kind! Kate commanded. 'He's a young man, an' he's not Muirisc born, an' he's O'Daly's friend, naturally enough, an' he's the chaplain of the convent. Sure, with half an eye, you can see that O'Daly's got the convent on his side. My taking the veil will profit him, as well as him. Sure, that's the point of it all.'

'Thin why not putt yer fut down,' asked Jerry, 'and say ye'll tek no veil at all?'

'I gave me word,' she answered simply.

'But aisy enough—ye can say as Mickey Dugan did on the gallus, to the hangman. "Egor!" said he, "I've changed my mind."'

'We don't be changin' *our* minds!' said Kate, with proud brevity; and thereupon she ran up the convent steps, and, after a little space, filled with the sound of jangling bells and the rattle of bars and chains, disappeared.

Jerry pursued the small remnant of his homeward course in a deep brown study. He entered his abode by the churchyard postern, bolted the door behind him, and lighted a lamp, still in an absent-minded way. Such flickering rays as pierced the smoky lamp-chimney cast feeble illumination upon a sort of castellated hovel—a high stone-walled room with arched doorways and stately, vaulted ceiling above, but with the rude furniture and squalid disorder of a labourer's cottage below.

But another idea did occur to him while he sat on the side of his bed, vacantly staring at the floor—an idea which set his shrewd gray eyes aglow. He rose hastily, took a lantern down from a nail on the whitewashed wall and lighted it. Then, with a key from his pocket, he unlocked a door at the farther end of the room, behind the bed, and passed through the open passage, with a springing step, into the darkness of a low stone-walled corridor.

The staircase down which we saw the guns and powder carried in secrecy, on that February night in 1867, led Jerry to the concealed doorway in the rounded wall which had then been discovered. He applied the needful trick to open this door; then carefully closed it behind him, and made his way, crouching and stealthily, through the passage to the door at its end. This he opened with another key, and entered abruptly.

'God save all here!' he called out upon the threshold in the half-jesting, half-sincere tone of one who, using an

ancient formula at the outset by way of irony, grows to feel that he means what it says.

‘God save you kindly!’ was the prompt response, in a thin, strangely vibrant voice; and on the instant the speaker came forward into the firelight.

He was a slender man of middle age, with a pale, spectacled face, framed by a veritable mane of dingy reddish hair thrown back from temples and brow. This brow, thus bared, was broad and thoughtful besides being wonderfully white, and, with the calm gray eyes, which shone steadily through the glasses, seemed to constitute practically the whole face. There were, one noted at a second glance, other portions of this face—a weak, pointed nose, for example, and a mouth and chin hidden under irregular outlines of straggling beard; but the brow and the eyes were what the gaze returned to. The man wore a loose, nondescript sort of gown, gathered at the waist with a cord. Save for a table against the wall, littered with papers and writing materials and lighted by a lamp in a bracket above, the chamber differed in little from its appearance on that memorable night when the dead monk’s sleep of centuries had been so rudely broken in upon.

‘I’m glad ye’ve come down ag’in to-day,’ said the man of the brow and eyes. ‘Since this mornin’ I’ve traced out the idintity of Finghin—the one wid the brain-ball I told ye of—as clear as daylight. Not a man-jack of ’em but ’ll see it now like the nose on their face.’

‘Ah, thin, that’s a mercy,’ said Jerry, seating himself tentatively on a corner of the table. ‘Egor! It looked at one toime there as if his idintity was gone to the divil intoirely. But lave you to smoke him out!’

‘It can be proved that this Finghin is wan an’ the same wid the so-called Fiachan Roe, who married the widow of the O’Dubhagain, in the elevinth cintury.’

'Ah, there ye have it!' said Jerry, shaking his head dejectedly. 'He *w'u'd* marry a widdeh, w'u'd he? Then, be me sowl, 'tis a marvel to grace he had anny ident—whatever ye call it—left at all. Well, sir, to tell ye the truth, 'tis disappointed I am in Finghin. I credited him with more since than to be marryin' widdehs. An' I suppose ye'll lave him out of your book altogether now. Egor, an' serve him right, too!'

The other smiled—a wan and fleeting smile of the eyes and brow.

'Ah, don't be talkin'!' he said pleasantly, and then added, with a sigh: 'More like he'll lave *me*, wid me work undone. You'll bear me witness, sir, that I've been patient, an' thried me best to live continted here in this cave of the earth, an' busy me mind wid work; but no man can master his drames. 'Tis that that's killin' me. Every night, the moment I'm asleep, faith! I'm out in the meadehs, wid flowers on the ditches an' birds singin', an' me fishin' in the brook, like I was a boy ag'in; an' whin I wake up, me heart's broke intirely! I tell ye, man, if 'twasn't for me book here, I'd go outside in spite of 'em all, an' let 'em hang me, if they like—jist for wan luk at the sky an' wan breath of fresh air.'

Jerry swung his legs nonchalantly, but there was a new speculation twinkling in his eyes as he regarded his companion.

'Ah, it won't be long now, Major Lynch,' he said consolingly. 'An' have ye much more to state in your book?'

'All the translatin' was finished long since, but 'tis comparin' the various books together I am, an' that takes a dale o' time. There's the psalter o' Timoleague Abbey, an' the psalter o' Sherkin, an' the book o' St. Kian o' Cape Clear, besides all the riccords of Muirisc that lay loose in the

chest. Yet I'm far from complainin'. God knows what I'd 'a' done without 'em.'

There are many marvels in Irish archæology. Perhaps the most wonderful of all is the controlling and consuming spell it had cast over Linsky, making it not only possible for him to live twelve years in an underground dungeon fairly contented, and undoubtedly occupied, but lifting him bodily out of his former mental state and up into an atmosphere of scholarly absorption and exclusively intellectual exertion. He had entered upon this long imprisonment with only an ordinary national-school education, and no special interest in or bent toward books. By the merest chance he happened to have learned to speak Irish, as a boy, and, later, to have been taught the written alphabet of the language. His first days of solitude in the subterranean chamber, after his recovery from the terrible blow on the head, had been whiled away by glancing over the curious parchment writings and volumes in the chest. Then, to kill time, he had essayed to translate one of the manuscripts, and Jerry had obligingly furnished him with paper, pens and ink. To have laboriously traced out the doubtful thread of continuity running through the confused and legendary pedigrees of the fierce Eugénian septs, to have lived for twelve long years buried in ancient Munster genealogies, wearing the eyesight out in waking hours upon archaic manuscripts, and dreaming by night of still more undecipherable parchment chronicles, may well seem to us, who are out in the busy noonday of the world, a colossal waste of time. No publisher alive would have thought for a moment of printing Linsky's compilations at his own risk, and probably not more than twenty people would have regretted his refusal the whole world over. But this consideration has never operated yet to prevent archæologists from devoting their time and energies and fortunes to

works which nobody on earth is going to read, much less publish.

Jerry was still contemplating Linsky with a grave new interest.

'Ye've changed that much since—since ye came down here for your health, 'tis my belafe not a mother's son of 'em 'u'd recognise ye up above,' he said reflectively.

Linsky spoke with eagerness :

'Man alive ! I'm jist dyin' to make the attimpt !'

'What ! an' turn yer back on all these foine riccords an' statements that ye've kept yer hand to so long ?'

The other's face fell.

'Sure, I c'u'd come down ag'in,' Linsky said hesitatingly.

'We'll see, we'll see,' remarked Jerry. Then in a careless manner, as if he had not had this chiefly in mind from the beginning, he asked : 'Usen't ye to be tellin' me ye were a kind of an attorney, Major Lynch ?'

'I was articted to an attorney wance upon a time, but I'd no time to sthick to it.'

'But ye'd know how to hev the law on a man, if he was yer inemy ?'

'Some of it is in me mind still, maybe,' replied Linsky, not with much confidence.

Jerry sprang lightly down from the table, walked over to the fire, and stood with his back to it, his legs wide apart, and his thumbs in his waistcoat armholes, as he had seen The O'Mahony bear himself.

'Well, Linsky, I've a bargain to offer yer !' he said bluntly.

Linsky stared in wild-eyed amazement. He had not heard the sound of this name of his for years.

'What—what was that name ye called ?' he asked, with a faltering voice.

'Ah, it's all right,' remarked Jerry, with assurance.

‘Faith! I knew ye wore Linsky from the beginning. An’ bechune ourselves, that’s but a drop in the bucket to the rest I know.’

Linsky’s surprise paralyzed his tongue. He could only pluck nervously at the cord about his waist and gaze in confusion at his gaoler friend.

‘You belaved all this time that ye were hid away down here by your fri’nds, to save ye from the poliss, who were scourin’ the counthry to arrest Fenians. Am I right?’ Jerry asked, with a dawning smile on his red face.

The other nodded mechanically, still in complete mystification.

‘An’ you all the time beseechin’ to go out an’ take yer chances, an’ me forever tellin’ ye ’twould be the ruin of the whole thund’rin’ Brotherhood if ye were caught?’ Jerry continued, the smile ripening as he went on.

Again Linsky’s answer was a puzzled nod of acquiescence.

‘Well, thin, there’s no Brotherhood left at all, an’ ’tis manny years since the poliss in these parts had so much as a drame of you or of anny Fenian under the sun.’

‘But why,’ stammered Linsky, at last finding voice—
‘why—thin——’

‘Why are ye here?’ Jerry amiably asked the question for him. ‘Only a small matther of discipline, as his riverence w’u’d say, when he ordered peas in our boots. To be open an’ above-board wid ye, man, ye were caught attimptin’ to hand over the lot of us to the sojers, that day we tried to take the fort. ’Tis the gallus we might ’a’ got by rayson of your informin’. Do ye deny that same?’

Linsky made no answer, but he looked now at the floor instead of at Jerry. In truth, he had been so long immured, confronted daily with the pretence that he was being hidden beyond the reach of the Castle’s myrmidons,

that this sudden resurrection of the truth about his connection with Fenianism seemed almost to refer to somebody else.

'Well, thin,' pursued Jerry, taking instant advantage of the other's confusion, 'Egor, 'twas as a traitor ye were tried an' condimned an' sentenced, while ye lay sinseless wid that whack on the head. There wor thim that w'u'd—uv—uv—well, not seen ye wake this side of purgatory, or wherever else ye had yer ticket for. But there was wan man that saved yer life from the rest—and he said: "No, don't kill him, an' don't bate him or lay a finger to him, an' I'll be at the expinse of keepin' him in a fine, grand place by himsilf, wid food of the best, an' whishky aich day, an' books an' writin's to impróve his learnin', an' no work to do, an' maybe, be the grace o' God, he'll come to think rightly about it all, an' be ashamed of himsilf an' his dirty doin's, an' be fit ag'in to come out an' hold up his head amongst honest min." That's the m'anin' of what he said, an' I'm the man he said it to—an' that's why I'm here now, callin' ye by yer right name, an' tellin' ye the thruth.'

Linsky hesitated for a minute or two, with downcast gaze and fingers fidgeting at the ends of his waist-cord. Then he lifted his face, which more than ever seemed all brow and eyes, and looked frankly at Jerry.

'What ye say is a surprise to me,' he began, choosing his words as he went. 'Ye never let on what your thoughts were concernin' me, an' I grew to forget how it was I came. But now you spake of it, sure 'tis the same to me as if I'd niver been thinkin' of anything else. Oh, thin, tell that man who spoke up for me, whoever he may be, that I've no word but praise for him. 'Twas a poor divil of a wake fool he saved the life of.'

'Wid a mixin' of rogue as well,' put in Jerry, by way of conscientious parenthesis.

'Tis the same thing—the worst fool is the rogue; but I tuk to 't to keep soul an' body together. Sure, I got into throuble in Cork, as manny another boy did before me, an' fled to Ameriky, an' there I 'listed, an' came in at the tail of the war, an' was shot down an' robbed where I lay, an' was in the hospital for months; an' whin I came out divil a thing was there for me to putt me hand to; an' the Fenians was started, an' I j'ined 'em. An' there was a little man I knew who made a livin' be sellin' information of what wint on, an' the same offer came to me through him—an' me starvin'; an' that's the way of it.'

'An' a notorious bad way at that!' said Jerry sternly.

'I'm of that same opinion,' Linsky went on, in all meekness. 'Don't think I'm definidin' meself. But I declare to ye, whin I look back on it, 'tis not like it was meself at all.'

'Ay, there ye have it!' exclaimed Jerry. 'Luk now! Min do be changin' and alterin' all the while. I know a man—an old man—who used to be honest an' fair-spoken, an' that devoted to a certain family, Egor! he'd laid down his life for 'em; an' now, be rayson that he's married a widdeh, an' got a boy of his own, what did he do but turn rogue an' lie awake nights schamin' to rob that same family! 'Tis that way we are! An' so wid you, Linsky, 'tis my be-lafe that ye began badly, an' that ye're minded to ind well. Ye're not the man ye were at all. 'Tis part by rayson, I think, of your studyin' in thim holy books, an' part, too'—his eyes twinkled as he added—'be rayson of enjoyin' my society every day.'

Linsky passed the humorous suggestion by unheeded, his every perception concentrated upon the tremendous possibility which had with such strange suddenness opened before him.

'An' what is it ye have in mind?' he asked breathlessly. 'There was word of a bargain.'

'Tis this,' explained Jerry: 'An old thief of the earth—him I spoke of that married the widdeh—is for robbin' an' plunderin' the man that saved your life. There's more to the tale than I'm tellin' ye, but that's the way of it; and I'll die for it but I'll prevint him; an' 'tis beyant my poor wits to do that same; an' so 'tis your help I'm needin'. An' there ye have it!'

The situation thus outlined did not meet the full measure of Linsky's expectations. His face fell.

'Sure ye might have had me advice in anny case,' he said, 'if that's all it comes to; but I thought I was goin' out.'

'An' why not?' answered Jerry. 'Who's stoppin' ye but me, an' me needin' ye outside?'

Linsky's eyes glowed radiantly through their glasses.

'Oh, but I'll come!' he exclaimed. 'An' whatever ye bid me that I'll do!'

'Ah, but,' Jerry shook his head dubiously, ''tis you that must be biddin' *me* what to do.'

'To the best of me power that I'll do, too,' the other affirmed; and the two men shook hands.

'On the morrow I'll get clothes for ye at Bantry,' Jerry said, an hour later, at the end of the conference they had been holding, 'an' nixt day we'll inthroduce ye to daylight, an' to—O'Daly.'

CHAPTER V.

NEAR THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT GABRIEL.

A VAST sunlit landscape under a smiling April sky—a landscape beyond the uses of mere painters with their tubes and brushes and camp-stools, where leagues of mountain ranges melted away into the shimmering haze of distance, and where the myriad armlets of the blue Atlantic in view, winding themselves about their lovers, the headlands, and placidly nursing their children, the islands, marked as on a map the coastwise journeys of a month—stretched itself out before the gaze of young Bernard O'Mahony, of Houghton County, Michigan, and was scarcely thanked for its pains.

The young man had completed four-fifths of the ascent of Mount Gabriel, from the Dunmanus side, and sat now on a moss-capped boulder, nominally meditating upon the splendours of the panorama spread out before him, but in truth thinking deeply of other things. He had not brought a gun, this time, but had in his hand a small brand-new hammer, with which, from time to time, to point the shifting phases of his reverie, he idly tapped the upturned sole of the foot resting on his knee.

From this coign of vantage he could make out the white walls and thatches of at least a dozen hamlets, scattered

over the space of thrice as many miles. Such of these as stood inland he did not observe a second time. There were others, more distant, which lay close to the bay, and these he studied intently as he mused, his eyes roaming along the coast-line from one to another in baffled perplexity. There was nothing obscure about them, so far as his vision went. Everything—the innumerable croft-walls dividing the wretched land below him into holdings; the dark umber patches where the bog had been cut; the serried layers of gray rock sloping transversely down the mountain-side, each with its crown of canary-blossomed furze; the wide stretches of desolate plain beyond, where no human habitation could be seen, yet where he knew thousands of poor creatures lived, all the same, in moss-hidden hovels in the nooks of the rocks; the pale sheen on the sea still farther away, as it slept in the sunlight at the feet of the cliffs—everything was as sharp and distinct as the picture in a telescope.

But all this did not help him to guess where the young woman in the broad black hat lived.

Bernard had thought a great deal about this young woman during the forty-eight hours which had elapsed since she stood up in the boat and waved her hand to him in farewell. In a guarded way he had made some inquiries at Goleen, where he was for the moment domiciled, but only to learn that people on the east side of the peninsula are conscious of no interest whatever in the people reputed to live on the west side. They are six or eight Irish miles apart, and there is high land between them. No one in Goleen could tell him anything about a beautiful dark young woman with a broad black hat. He felt that they did not even properly imagine to themselves what he meant. In Goleen the young women are not beautiful, and they wear shawls on their heads, not hats.

Then he had conceived the idea of investigating the west shore for himself. On the map in his guide-book this seemed a simple enough undertaking, but now, as he let his gaze wander again along the vast expanse of ragged and twisted coast-line, he saw that it would mean the work of many days.

And then—then he saw something else—a vision which fairly took his breath away.

Along the furze-hedge road, which wound its way up the mountain-side from Dunmanus and the south, two human figures were moving toward him, slowly, and still at a considerable distance. One of these figures was that of a woman, and—yes, it was a woman!—and she wore a hat—as like as could be to that broad-brimmed black hat he had been dreaming of. Bernard permitted himself no doubts. He was of the age of miracles. Of course it was *she*!

Without a moment's hesitation he slid down off his rocky perch and seated himself behind a clump of furze. It would be time enough to disclose his presence—if, indeed he did at all—when she had come up to him.

No such temptation to secrecy besets us. We may freely hasten down the mountain-side to where Kate, walking slowly and pausing from time to time to look back upon the broadening sweep of land and sea below her, was making the ascent of Mount Gabriel.

Poor old Murphy had been left behind, much against his will, to nurse and bemoan his swollen ankle. The companion this time was a younger brother of the missing Malachy, a lumpish, silent 'boy' of twenty five or six, who slouched along a few paces behind his mistress and bore the luncheon-basket. This young man was known to all Muirisc as John Pat, which was by way of distinguishing him from the other Johns who were not also Patricks. As it was now well on toward nine centuries since the good Brian Boru

ordained that every Irishman should have a surname, the presumption is that John Pat did possess such a thing, but feudal Muirisc never dreamed of suggesting its common use. This surname had been heard at his baptism; it might be mentioned again upon the occasion of his marriage, though his wife would certainly be spoken of as Mrs. John Pat, and in the end, if he died at Muirisc, the surname would be painted in white letters on the black wooden cross set over his grave. For all the rest he was just John Pat.

And mediæval Muirisc, too, could never have dreamed that his age and sex might be thought by outsiders to render him an unsuitable companion for Miss Kate in her wanderings over the countryside. In their eyes, and in his own, he was a mere boy, whose mission was to run errands, carry bundles, or do whatever else the people of the castle bade him do; in return for which they, in one way or another, looked to it that he continued to live, and even, on occasion, gave him an odd shilling or two.

'Look now, John Pat,' said Kate, halting once more to gaze back; 'there's Dunbeacon and Dunmanus and Muirisc beyant, and, maybe, if it wasn't so far we could see the Three Castles, too; and whin we're at the top, we should be able to see Rosbrin and the White Castle and the Black Castle, and the strand over which Ballydesmond stood, on the other side, as well. 'Tis my belafe no other family in the world can stand and look down on seven of their castles at one view.'

John Pat looked dutifully along the coast-line as her gesture commanded, and changed his basket into the other hand, but offered no comment.

'And there, across the bay,' the girl went on, 'is the land that's marked on the Four Masters' map for the O'Dalys. Ye were there many times, John Pat, after

crabs and the like. Tell me now, did ever you or anny one else hear of a castle built there be the O'Dalys?'

'Sorra a wan, Miss Katie.'

'There you have it! My word, the impidence of thim O'Dalys—strolling beggars, and hedge-teachers, and singers of ballads be the wayside! 'Tis in the books, John Pat, that wance there was a King of Ireland named Hugh Dubh—Hugh the Black—and these bards so perplexed and bothered the soul out of him with claims for money and fine clothes and the best places at the table, and kept the land in such a turmoil by rayson of the scurrilous verses they wrote about thim that gave thim less than their demands—that Hugh, glory be to him! swore not a man of 'em should remain in all Ireland. "Out ye go!" says he. But thin they raised such a cry that a wake, kindly man—St. Columbkil that was to be—took pity on 'em, and interceded with the king, and so, worse luck! they kept their place. Ah, thin, if Hugh Dubh had had his way with 'em, 'twould be a different kind of Ireland we'd see this day!'

'Well, this Hugh Dove, as you call him'—spoke up a clear, fresh-toned male voice, which was not John Pat's—'even he couldn't have wanted a prettier Ireland than this is, right here in front of us!'

Kate, in vast surprise, turned at the very first sound of this strange voice. A young man had risen to his feet from behind the furze hedge, close beside her, his rosy-cheeked face wreathed in amiable smiles. She recognised the wandering O'Mahony from Houghton County, Michigan, and softened the rigid lines into which her face had been startled, as a token of friendly recognition.

'Good-morning,' the young man added, as a ceremonious after-thought. 'Isn't it a lovely day?'

'You seem to be viewing our country hereabouts with great complateness,' commented Kate, with a half-smile,

not wholly free from irony. There really was no reason for suspecting the accidental character of the encounter, save the self-conscious and confident manner in which the young man had, on the instant, attached himself to her expedition. Even as she spoke, he was walking along at her side.

'Oh yes,' he answered cheerfully, 'I'm mixing up business and pleasure, don't you see, all the while I'm here—and really they get so tangled up together, every once in a while, that I can't tell which is which. But just at this moment—there's no doubt about it whatever—pleasure is right bang-up on top.'

'It *is* a fine, grand day,' said Kate, with a shade of reserve. The frankly florid compliment of the Occident was novel to her.

'Yes, simply wonderful weather,' he pursued. 'Only April, and here's the skin all peeling off from my nose.'

Kate could not but in courtesy look at this afflicted feature. It was a short good-humoured nose, with just the faintest and kindest suggestion of an upward tilt at the end. One should not be too serious with the owner of such a nose.

'You have business here, thin?' she asked. 'I thought you were looking at castles—and shooting herons.'

He gave a little laugh, and held up his hammer as a voucher.

'I'm a mining engineer,' he explained: 'I've been prospecting for a company all around Cappagh and the Mizzen Head, and now I'm waiting to hear from London what the assays are like. Oh yes—that reminds me—I ought to have asked before—how is the old man—the chap we had to carry to the boat? I hope his ankle's better.'

'It is, thank you,' she replied.

He chuckled aloud at the recollections which the subject suggested.

'He soured on me, right from the start, didn't he?' the young man went on. 'I've laughed a hundred times since, at the way he chiselled me out of my place in the boat—that is to say, *some* of the time I've laughed—but—but then lots of other times I couldn't see any fun in it at all. Do you know,' he continued, almost dolefully, 'I've been hunting all over the place for you.'

'I've nothing to do with the minerals on our lands,' Kate answered. 'Tis a thrustee attends to all that.'

'Pshaw! I didn't want to talk minerals to *you*.'

'And what, thin?'

'Well—since you put it so straight—why—why, of course—I wanted to ask you more about *our* people, about the O'Mahonys. You seemed to be pretty well up on the thing. You see, my father died seven or eight years ago, so that I was too young to talk to him much about where he came from, and all that. And my mother, her people were from a different part of Ireland, and so, you see——'

'Ah, there's not much to tell now,' said Kate, in a saddened tone. 'They were a great family once, and now are nothing at all, with poor me as the last of the lot.'

'I don't call that "nothing at all," by a jugful,' protested Bernard, with conviction.

Kate permitted herself a brief cousinly smile.

'All the same, they end with me, and after me comes in the O'Dalys.'

Lines of thought raised themselves on the young man's forehead, and ran down to the sunburnt nose.

'How do you mean?' he asked dubiously. 'Are you—don't mind my asking—are you going to marry one of that name?'

She shrugged her shoulders, to express repugnance at the very thought.

'I'll marry no one—laste of all an O'Daly,' she said

firmly. Then, after a moment's hesitation, she decided upon a further explanation. 'I'm goin' to take me vows at the convent within the month,' she added.

Bernard stared open-eyed at her.

'I-gad !' was all he said.

The girl's face lightened at the sound of this exclamation, bringing back as it did a flood of welcome memories.

'I know you by that word for a true O'Mahony—an American O'Mahony,' she said, with eager pleasure beaming in her deep-gray eyes. She turned to her retainer: 'You remember that same word, John Pat. Who was it used always to be saying, "I gad !" ?'

John Pat searched the landscape with a vacuous glance.

'W'u'd it be Father Harrington ?' he asked.

'Huh !' sniffed Kate, in light contempt, and turned again to the young engineer, with a backward nod toward John Pat. 'He's an honest lad,' she said apologetically, 'but the Lord only knows what's inside of his head. Ah, sir, there *was* an O'Mahony here—'tis twelve years now since he sailed away ; ah, the longest day Muirisc stands she'll not see such another man—bold and fine, with a heart in him like a lion, and yet soft and tender to thim he liked and a janius for war and commerce and government that made Muirisc blossom like a rose. Ah, a grand man was our O'Mahony !'

'So you live at Muirisc, eh ?' asked the practical Bernard.

'Twas him used always to say "I-gad !" whin things took him by surprise,' remarked Kate, turning to study the vast downward view attentively.

'Well, I said it because *I* was taken by surprise,' said the young man. 'What else could a fellow say with such a piece of news as that dumped down on him ? But say, you don't mean it, do you—*you* going to be a nun ?'

She looked at him through luminous eyes, and nodded a grave affirmative.

Bernard walked for a little way in silence, moodily eyeing the hammer in his hand. Once or twice he looked up at his companion as if to speak, then cast down his eyes again. At last, after he had helped her to cross a low marshy stretch at the base of a ridge of gray rock, and to climb to the top of the boulder—for they had left the road now and were making their way obliquely up the barren crest—he found words to utter.

‘You don’t mind my coming along with you,’ he asked, ‘under the circumstances?’

‘I don’t see how I’m to prevint you, especially with you armed with a hammer,’ she said, in gentle banter.

‘And I can ask you a plain question without offending you?’ he went on; and then, without waiting for an answer, put his question: ‘It’s just this—I’ve only seen you twice, it’s true, but I feel as if I’d known you for years, and, besides, we’re kind of relations—are you going to do this of your own free will?’

Kate, for answer, lifted her hand and pointed westward toward the pale-blue band along the distant coast-line.

‘That castle you see yonder at the bridge,’ she said—‘’twas there that Finghin, son of Diarmid Mor O’Mahony, bate the MacCarthys with great slaughter, in anno Domini 1319.’

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE MOUNTAIN-TOP—AND AFTER.

THE two young people, with John Pat and the basket close behind, stood at last upon the very summit of Gabriel—a wild and desolate jumble of naked rocks piled helter-skelter about them, and at their feet a strange little circular lake, which in all the ages had mirrored no tree or flowering rush or green thing whatsoever, but knew only of the clouds and of the lightning's play and of the gathering of the storm-demons for descent upon the homes of men.

A solemn place is a mountain-top. The thin, spiritualized air is all alive with mysteries which, down below in the sordid atmosphere, visit only the brains of men whom we lock up as mad. The drying up of the great globe-floods; the slow birth of vegetation; the rank growth of uncouth monsters; the coming of the erect, fleet-footed, bare-skinned savage beast called man; the primæval æons of warfare wherein knowledge of fire, of metals, of tanned hides and habitations was laboriously developed and the huger reptiles were destroyed; the dawn of history through the clouds of sun and serpent worship; the weary ages of brutish raids and massacres, of barbaric creeds and cruel lusts—all this the mountain-tops have stood still and watched, and, so far as in them lay, understood.

Some have comprehended more of what they saw than others. The tallest man is not necessarily the wisest. So there are very lofty mountains which remain stupid, despite their advantages, and there are relatively small mountains which have come to be almost human in their understanding of, and sympathy with, the world-long drama they have watched unfolding itself. The Brocken, for example, is scarcely nipple-high to many another of its German brethren, yet which of the rest has such rich memories, stretching back through countless centuries of Teuton, Slav, Alemanni, Suevi, Frank and Celt to the days when nomad strove with troglodyte, and the great cave-bear grappled with the mammoth in the silent fastnesses of the Harz?

In Desmond, the broad-based, conical Gabriel has as unique a character of another kind. There is nothing of the frank and homely German familiarity in the reputation it enjoys at home. To be sure, the mountain is scarred to the throat by bogcutters; cabins and the ruins of cabins lurk hidden in clefts of rocks more than half-way up its gray, furze-clad sides; yet it produces the effect of standing sternly aloof from human things. The peasants think of it as a sacred eminence. It has its very name from the legend of the archangel, who, flying across Europe in disgust at man's iniquities, could not resist the temptation to descend for a moment to touch with his foot this beautiful mountain gem in the crown of Carbery.

Kate explained this legend to her young companion from Houghton County, and showed him the marks of the celestial visitor's foot plainly visible in the rock. He bestowed such critical, not to say professional, scrutiny upon these marks that she made haste to take up another branch of the ancient fable.

'And this little round lake here,' she went on, 'they'll all tell you 'twas made by bodily lifting out a great cylinder of

rock and carting it miles through the air and putting it down in the sea out there, where it's ever since been known as Fastnet Rock. They say the measurements are precisely the same. I forget now if 'twas the Archangel Gabriel did that, too, or the devil.'

'The result comes to about the same thing,' commented the engineer. 'Whoever did it,' he went on, scanning the regularly rounded sides of the pool, 'made a good workmanlike job of it.'

'No one's ever been able to touch the bottom of it,' said Kate, with pride.

'Oh, come, now! I've heard that of every second lake in Ireland.'

'Well, certainly *I've* not tested it,' she replied frostily; 'but 'tis well known that if you sink a bottle in this lake 'twill be found out there in Dunmanus Bay, fourteen hundred feet below us.'

'Why, the very first principle of hydrostatics!' began Bernard, with controversial eagerness. Then he stopped short, stroked his smooth chin, and changed the subject abruptly. 'Speaking of bottles,' he said, 'I see your man there is eyeing that lunch-basket with the expression of a meat-axe. Wouldn't it be a clever idea to let him unpack it?'

The while John Pat stripped the basket of its contents, and spread them upon a cloth in the mossy shadow of an overhanging boulder, the two by a common impulse strolled over to the eastern edge of the summit.

'Beyond Roaring Water Bay the O'Driscoll Castles begin,' said Kate. 'They tell me they're poor trifles compared with ours.'

'I like to hear you say "ours,"' the young man broke in. 'I want you to keep right on remembering all the while that I belong to the family. And—and I wish to heaven

there was something I could do to show how tickled to death I am that I do belong to it !'

'I have never been here before,' Kate said, in a musing tone, which carried in it a gentle apology for abstraction. 'I did not know there was anything so big and splendid in the world.'

The spell of this mighty spectacle at once enchanted and oppressed her. She stood gazing down upon it for some minutes, holding up her hand as a plea for silence when her companion would have spoken. Then, with a lingering sigh, she turned away, and led the slow walk back toward the lake.

''Twas like dreaming,' she said with gravity; 'and a strange thought came to me: 'twas that this lovely Ireland I looked down upon was beautiful with the beauty of death; that 'twas the corpse of me country I was taking a last view of. Don't laugh at me! I had just that feeling. Ah, poor, poor Ireland !'

Bernard saw tears glistening upon her long black lashes, and scarcely knew his own voice when he heard it, in such depths of melancholy was it pitched.

'Better times are coming now,' he said. 'If we open up the mines we are counting on, it ought to give work to at least two hundred men.'

She turned sharply upon him.

'Don't talk like that!' she said, in half command, half entreaty. ''Tis not trade or work or mines that keeps a nation alive when 'tis fit to die. One can have them all, and riches untold, and still sink with a broken heart. 'Tis nearly three hundred years since the first of the exiled O'Mahonys sailed away yonder—from Skull and Crook-haven they wint—to fight and die in Spain. Thin others wint—Conagher and Domnal and the rest—to fight and die in France; and so for centuries the stream of life has

flowed away from Ireland—with every other family the same as with ours. What nation under the sun could stand the drain? 'Tis twelve years now since the best and finest of them all sailed away to fight in France, and to—to die—oh, *wirra!*—who knows where? So'—her great eyes flashed proudly through their tears—'don't talk of mines to me! 'Tis too much like the English!'

Bernard somehow felt himself grown much taller and older as he listened to this outburst of passionate lamentation, with its whiplash end of defiance, and realized that this beautiful girl was confiding it all to him. He threw back his shoulders and laid a hand gently on her arm.

'Come, come!' he pleaded, with a soothing drawl, '*don't* give way like that! We'll take a bite of something to eat, and get down again where the grass grows. Why, you've no idea—the bottom of a coal-mine is sociable and lively compared with this. I'd get the blues myself up here in another half-hour!'

A few steps were taken in silence, and then the young man spoke again, with settled determination in his voice.

'You can say what you like,' he ground out between his teeth; 'or, rather, you needn't say any more than you like; but I've got my own idea about this convent business, and I don't like it, and I don't for a minute believe that you like it. Mind, I'm not asking you to tell me whether you do or not—only I want to say to you just this: Count on me as your friend—call it cousin, too, if you like; keep me in mind as a fellow who'll go to the whole length of his rope to help you, and then break the rope like a piece of paper-twine if it's necessary to go further. That's all!'

It is the property of these weird mountain-tops to make realities out of the most unlikely things. On a lower terrestrial level Kate's mind might have seen nothing but fantastic absurdity in this proffer of confidential friendship

and succour from a youth whom she had met twice. Here in the finer and more eager air, lifted up to be the companion of clouds, the girl looked with grave frankness into his eyes and gave him her hand in token of the bond.

Without further words they rejoined John Pat, and sat down to lunch.

Indeed, there were few further words during the afternoon which John Pat was not privileged to hear. He sat with them during the meal in the true democratic spirit of the sept relation, and he kept close behind them on their rambling, leisurely descent of the mountain-side. From the tenor of their talk he gathered vaguely that the strange young man was some sort of relation from America, and as relations from America present, perhaps, the one idea most universally familiar to the Irish peasant's mind, his curiosity was not aroused. Their conversation, for the most part, was about that remarkable O'Mahony who had gone away years ago, and whom John Pat only dimly remembered.

A couple of miles from Muirisc the homeward-bound trio—for Bernard had tacitly made himself a party to the entire expedition, and felt as if he, too, were going home—encountered in the late afternoon two men sitting by the roadside ditch.

'Oh, there's Jerry!' said Kate to her companion; 'Mr. Higgins, I mean—wan of my trustees. I'll introduce you to him.'

Jerry's demeanour as the group approached him bore momentary traces of embarrassment. He looked at the man beside him, and then cast a backward glance at the ditch, as if wishing that they were both safely hidden behind its mask of stone wall and furze. But this was clearly impossible; and the two stood up at an obvious

suggestion from Jerry and put as good a face upon their presence as possible.

'This is a relation of *moine* from Ameriky, too,' said Jerry, after some words had passed, indicating the tall, thin, shambling, spectacled figure beside him—'Mr. Joseph Higgins, of—of—of——'

'Of Boston,' said the other, after an awkward pause.

He seemed ill at ease in his badly-fitting clothes, and looked furtively from one to another of the faces before him.

'An' what d'ye think, Miss Katie?' hurriedly continued Jerry. 'Egor! Be all the miracles of Moses, he's possessed of more learnin' about the O'Mahonys than anny other man alive. Cormac O'Daly 'd be a fool to him. An', Egor! he used to know *our* O'Mahony whin he was in Ameriky, before ever he came over to us!'

'Ye're wrong, Jerry,' said Mr. Joseph Higgins, with cautious hesitation; 'I didn't say I knew him. I said I knew of him. I was employed to search for him whin he was heir to the estate, unbeknownst to himself, an' I wint to the town where he'd kept a cobbler's shop—Tecumsky was the name of it—an' I made inquiries for Hugh O'Mahony, but——'

'What's that you say? Hugh O'Mahony—a shoemaker in Tecumseh, New York?' broke in young Bernard, with sharp, almost excited emphasis.

''Tis what I said,' responded the other, his pale face flushing nervously; 'only—only he'd gone to the War.'

'An' that was *our* O'Mahony,' explained Jerry. 'Glory be to God, he learned of the search made for him, an' he came to us afther the War.'

Bernard was not sure that he had got the twitching muscles of his face under control, but at least he could manage his tongue.

‘Oh, he came over here, did he?’ he said, with a fair affectation of polite interest.

‘You spoke as if you knew him,’ put in Kate eagerly.

‘My father knew him as well—as well as he knew himself,’ answered Bernard with evasion, and then bit his lip in fear that he had said too much.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INTELLIGENT YOUNG MAN.

WITHIN the next few days the people of Muirisc found themselves becoming familiar with the spectacle of two strange figures walking about among their narrow, twisted streets or across the open space of common between the castle and the quay. The sight of new-comers was still unusual enough in Muirisc to disturb the minds of the inhabitants; but since the mines had been opened in the district the old-time seclusion had never quite come back, and it was uneasily felt that in the lapse of years even a hotel might come to be necessary.

One of these strangers—a rickety, spindling, weird-eyed man in spectacles—was known to be a cousin of Jerry Higgins, from America. The story went that he was a great scholar, peculiarly learned in ancient Irish matters. Muirisc took this for granted all the more readily because he seemed not to know anything else, and watched his shambling progress through the village streets by Jerry's side with something of the affectionate pity which the Irish peasant finds always in his heart for the being he describes as a 'nathural.'

The other new-comer answered vastly better to Muirisc's conceptions of what a man from America should be like.

He was young, fresh-faced, and elastic of step, with square shoulders, a lithe, vigorous frame, and eyes which looked with frank and cheerful shrewdness at all men and things. He outdid even the most communicative of Muirisc's old white-capped women in polite salutations to passers-by on the highway, and he was amiably untiring in his efforts to lure with pennies into friendly converse the wild little girls of Muirisc, who watched him with twinkling, squirrels' eyes from under their shawls, and whisked off like so many coveys of partridges at his near approach. The little boys, with the stronger sense of their sex, invariably took his pennies, but no more than their sisters could they be induced to talk.

There was a delightful absence of reserve in this young man from America. Muirisc seemed to know everything about him all at once. His name was O'Mahony, and his father had been a County Cork man; he was a mining engineer, and had been brought over to Europe by a mining company as an expert in copper-ores and the refining of barytes; he was living at Goleen, but liked Muirisc much better, both from a mineralogical point of view and socially; he was reckless in the expenditure of money on the cars from Goleen and back, and on the hire of boatmen at Muirisc; he was filled to the top and running over with funny stories, he was a good Catholic, he took the acutest interest in all the personal narratives of the older inhabitants, and was free with his tobacco—truly, a most admirable young man!

He had been about Muirisc and the immediate vicinity for a week or so, breaking up an occasional rock with his hammer when he was sure people were watching him, but more often lounging about in gossip on the main street, or fishing in the harbour with a boatman who would talk, when he made in a casual way the acquaintance of O'Daly.

The little old man, white-haired now, but with the blue-black shadows of clean shaving still staining high up his jaws and sunken cheeks, had come down the street, nodding briefly to such villagers as saluted him, and carrying his hands clasped at the buttons on the back of his long-tailed coat. He had heard rumours of this young miner from America, and paused now on the outskirts of a group in front of the cobbler's shop, whom Bernard was entertaining with tales of giant salmon in the waters of Lake Superior.

'Oh, this is Mr. O'Daly, I believe,' the young man had on the instant interrupted his narrative to remark. 'I'm glad to meet you, sir. I'd been thinking of calling on you every day, but I know you're a busy man, and it's only since yesterday that I've felt that I had real business with you. My name's O'Mahony, and I'm here for the South Desmond Barytes Syndicate. Probably you know the name.'

The O'Daly found his wrinkled old paw being shaken warmly in the grasp of this affable young man before he had time to be astonished.

'O'Daly's my name,' he said hesitatingly. 'And you have business wid me, you said?'

'I guess you'll think so!' responded the other. 'I've just got word from my superiors in London to go ahead, and naturally you're the first man I want to talk with.'

And then they linked arms.

'Well,' said the cobbler, as the group watched the receding figures of the pair, 'my word, there's more ways of killin' a dog than chokin' him wid butter!'

An hour later Bernard sat comfortably ensconced in the easiest chair afforded by the living-room of the castle, with the infant O'Daly on his knee and a trio of grown-up people listening in unaffected pleasure to his sprightly talk. He

had at the outset mistaken Mrs. O'Daly for a married sister of Kate's—an error which he managed on the instant to emphasize by a gravely deliberate wink at Kate—and now held the mother's heart completely by his genial attentions to the babe. He had set old O'Daly all aglow with eager interest by his eulogy of Muirisc's mineral wealth as against all other districts in West Carbery. And all the time, through anecdote, business converse, exchange of theories on the rearing and precocity of infants, and bright, flowing chatter on every subject under the sun, he had contrived to make Kate steadily conscious that she was the true object of his visit. Now and again the consciousness grew so vivid that she felt herself blushing over the embroidered altar-cloth at which she worked in the shadow between the windows.

'Well, sir,' said Bernard, dandling the infant tenderly as he spoke, 'I don't know what I wouldn't give to be able, when I go back, to tell my father how I'd seen the O'Mahony castles here, and all that, right on the family's old stamping-ground.'

'Yer father died, ye say, manny years ago?' remarked O'Daly.

'Sure, "manny" 's not the word for it,' put in Mrs. O'Daly, with a flattering smile. 'He's but a lad yet, for all he's seen and done.'

'Nobody could grow old in such an air as this,' said the young man briskly. 'You yourself bear witness to that, Mrs. O'Daly. Yes, my father died when I was a youngster. We moved out West after the war—I was a little shaver then—and he didn't live long after that.'

'And would he be in the moines, too?' asked Cormac.

'No; in the leather business,' answered Bernard, without hesitation. 'To the end of his days he was always counting on coming back here to Ireland and seeing the home of

the O'Mahonys again. To hear him talk you'd have thought there wasn't another family in Ireland worth mentioning.'

'Twas always that way wid thim O'Mahonys,' said O'Daly, throwing a significant glance over his wife and step-daughter. 'I can spake freely to you, sir; for I'll be bound ye favour yer mother's side, and ye were not brought up amongst them; but bechune ourselves, there's a dale o' nonsinse talked about thim same O'Mahonys. Did you ever hear yer father mintion an O'Daly?'

'Well—no—I can't say I did,' answered the young man, bending his mind to comprehension of what the old man might be driving at.

'There ye have it!' said Cormac, bringing his hand down with emphasis on the table. 'Sir, 'tis a hard thing to say, but the ingrathitude of thim O'Mahonys just passes belafe. Sure, 'twas we that made thim. What were they but poyrutts and robbers of the earth, wid no sinse but for raids an' incursions, an' burnin' down abbeys an' holy houses, and makin' war on their neighbours? An', sure, 'twas we civilized 'em—we O'Dalys—that they trate now as not fit to lace up their shoes. 'Twas we taught thim O'Mahonys to rade an' write, an' everything else they knew in learnin' and politeness. An' so far as that last-mintioned commodity goes'—this with a still more meaning, sidelong glance toward the women—'faith! a dale of our labour was wasted intoirely.'

Even if Kate would have taken up the challenge, the young man gave her no time.

'Oh, of course,' he broke in, 'I've heard of the O'Dalys all my life. Everybody knows about *them*!'

'Luk at that now!' exclaimed Cormac, in high triumph. 'Sure, 'tis Ameriky 'll set all of us right, an' keep the old learning up. Ye'll have heard, sir, of Cuchonnacht O'Daly, called *na Sgoile*, or "of the school"——'

‘What, old Cocoanut!’ cried Bernard with vivacity, ‘I should think so!’

‘’Twas he was our founder,’ pursued Cormac excitedly. ‘An’ after him came eight-an’-twinty descindants, all the chief bards of Ireland. An’ in comparatively late toimes they had a school at Drumnea, in Kilcrohane, where the sons of the kings of Spain came for their complate eddication, an’ the princes doid there, an’ are buried there in our family vault—sure, the ruins of the college remain to this day——’

‘You don’t mean to say you’re one of *that* family, Mr. O’Daly?’ asked Bernard with eagerness.

‘Tis my belase I’m the head of it,’ responded Cormac with lofty simplicity. ‘I’m an old man, sir, an’ of an humble nature, an’ I’d not be takin’ honours on meself. But whin that bye there—that bye ye howld on yer knee—grows up, an’ he the owner of Muirisc an’ its moines an’ the fishin’, wid all eddication an’ foine advantages—sure, if it plases him to asssume the dignity of *The O’Daly*, an’ putt the grand old family wance more where it belongs, I’m thinkin’ me bones ’ll rest the aisier in their grave.’

Bernard looked down with an abstracted air at the unpleasantly narrow skull of the child on his knee, with its big ears and thin, plastered ringlets that suggested a whimsical baby-caricature of the mother’s crimps. He heard Kate rise behind him, walk across the floor, and leave the room with an emphatic closing of the door. To be frank, the impulse burned hotly within him to cuff the infantile head of this future chief of the O’Dalys.

‘I’ve a pome on the subject, which I composed last Aister Monday,’ O’Daly went on, ‘which I’d be deloighted to rade to ye.’

‘Unfortunately I must be hurrying along now,’ said

Bernard, rising on the instant, and depositing the child on the floor. 'I'm sorry, sir, but——'

'Sure, 'tis you do be droivin' everybody from the house wid yer pomes,' commented Mrs. O'Daly ungenerously.

'Oh no, I assure you!' protested the young man. 'I've often heard of Mr. O'Daly's verses, and very soon now I'm coming to get him to read them all to me. Have you got some about Cocanut, Mr. O'Daly?'

'This particular one,' said Cormac doggedly, 'trates of a much later period. Indeed, 'tis so late that it hasn't happened at all yit. 'Tis laid in futurity, sir, an' dales wid the grand career me son is to have whin he takes his proud position as *The* O'Daly, the proide of West Carbery.'

'Well, now you've got to read me that the very first thing when I come next time,' said Bernard. Then he added, with a smile: 'For, you know, I want you to let me come again.'

'Sir, ye can't come too soon or stop too long,' Mrs. O'Daly assured him. 'Sure, what wid there bein' no railway to Muirisc an' no gintry near by, an' what wid the dale we hear about the O'Dalys an' their supayriority over the O'Mahonys, an' thin thim pomes—my word, we do be starvin' for the soight of a new face!'

'Then I can't be too glad that my face *is* new,' promptly put in Bernard, wreathing the countenance in question with beaming amiability. 'And in a few days I shall want to talk business with Mr. O'Daly, too, about the mining rights we shall need to take up.'

'Ye'll be welcome always,' said O'Daly.

And with that comforting pledge in his ears, the young man shook hands with the couple and made his way out of the room.

'Don't trouble yourselves to come out,' he begged. 'I feel already at home all over the house.'

‘Now, that’s a young man of sinse,’ said the O’Daly, after the door had closed behind their visitor. ‘’Tis not manny ye’ll foind nowadays wid such intelligince insoide his head.’

‘Nor so comely a face on the outside of it,’ commented his wife.

At the end of the hallway this intelligent young man was not surprised to encounter Kate, and she made no pretence of not having waited for him. Yet as he approached she moved to pass by.

‘’Tis althered opinions you hold about the O’Mahonys and the O’Dalys,’ she said, with studied coldness and a haughty carriage of her dark head.

He caught her sleeve as she would have passed him.

‘See here,’ he whispered eagerly, ‘don’t you make a goose of yourself. I’ve told more lies and acted more lies generally this afternoon for *you* than I would for all the other women on earth boiled together. Sh—h! Just you keep mum, and we’ll see you through this thing slick and clean.’

‘I want no lies told for me or acted either,’ retorted Kate.

Her tone was proud enough still, but the lines of her face were relenting.

‘No, I don’t suppose for a minute you do,’ he murmured back, still holding her sleeve, and with his other hand on the latch. ‘You’re too near an angel for that. I tell you what: Suppose you just start in and do as much praying as you can, to kind o’ balance the thing. It’ll all be needed; for as far as I can see now, I’ve got some regular old whoppers to come yet.’

Then the young man released the sleeve, snatched up

the hand at the end of that sleeve, kissed it, and was gone before Kate could say another word.

When she had thought it all over, through hours of seclusion in her room, she was still very much at sea as to what that word would have been had time been afforded her in which to utter it.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNCIL OF WAR.

HAVING left the castle, Bernard walked briskly away across the open square, past the quay, and along the curling stretch of sands which led to the path under the cliffs. He had taken the hammer from his pocket and swung it as he strode onward, whistling as he went.

A mile or so along the strand he turned off at a footpath leading up the rocks, and climbed this nimbly to the top, gaining which he began to scan closely the broad expanse of dun-coloured bog plain which dipped gradually toward Mount Gabriel. His search was not protracted. He had made out the figures he sought, and straightway set out over the bog with a light, springing step, still timed to a whistled marching tune, toward them.

‘Well, I’ve treed the coon!’ was his remark when he had joined Jerry and Linsky. ‘It was worth waiting for a week just to catch him like that, with his guard down. Wait a minute, then I can be sure of what I’m talking about.’

The others had not invited this adjuration by any overt display of impatience, and they watched the young man now take an envelope from his pocket and work out a sum on its back with a pencil, in placid if open-eyed contentment. They both studied him, in fact, much as their grandfathers

might have gazed at the learned pig at a fair—as a being with resources and accomplishments quite beyond the laborious necessity of comprehension.

He finished his ciphering, and gave them in terse summary the benefit of it.

‘The way I figure the thing,’ he said, with his eye on the envelope, ‘is this. The mines were going all right when your man went away, twelve years ago. The output then was worth, say, eight thousand pounds sterling a year. Since then it has once or twice gone as high as twenty thousand pounds, and once it’s been down to eleven thousand pounds. From all I can gather, the average ought to have been, say, fourteen thousand pounds. The mining tenants hold on the usual thirty-one-year lease, paying fifty pounds a year to begin with, and then one-sixteenth on the gross sales. There is a provision of a maximum surface-drainage charge of two pounds an acre, but there’s nothing in that. On my average, the whole royalties would be nine hundred and twenty-five pounds a year. That, in twelve years, would be eleven thousand pounds. I think myself that it’s a good deal more ; but that’ll do as a starter. And you say O’Daly’s been sending the boss two hundred pounds a year?’

‘At laste for tin years—not for the last two,’ said Jerry.

‘Very well, then ; you’ve got nine thousand pounds. The interest on that for two years alone would make up all he sent away.’

‘An’ ’tis your idea that O’Daly has putt by all that money?’

‘And half as much more ; and not a cent of it all belongs to him.’

‘Thru for you ; ’tis Miss Katie’s money,’ mourned Jerry, shaking his curly red head and disturbing his fat

breast with a prolonged sigh. 'But she'll never lay finger to anny of it. Oh, Cormac, you're the divil!'

The young man sniffed impatiently.

'That's the worst of you fellows,' he said sharply. 'You take fright like a flock of sheep. What the deuce are you afraid of? No wonder Ireland isn't free, with men who've got to sit down and cry every few minutes!' Then the spectacle of pained surprise on Jerry's fat face drove away his mood of criticism. 'Or no; I don't mean that,' he hastened to add; 'but, really, there's no earthly reason why O'Daly shouldn't be brought to book. There's law here for that sort of thing as much as there is anywhere else.'

'Twas Miss Katie's own words that I'd be a fool to thry to putt the law on Cormac O'Daly, an' him an attorney,' explained Jerry, in defiant self-defence.

'Perhaps that's true about *your* putting the law on him,' Bernard permitted himself to say. 'But you're a trustee, you tell me, as much as he is, and others can act for you and force him to give his accounts. That can be done upon your trust-deed.'

'Me paper, is it?'

'Yes, the one the boss gave you.'

'Egor! Thin O'Daly has it. He begged me for it, to keep 'em together. If I'd ask him for it, belike he'd refuse me. You've no knowledge of the charachter of that same O'Daly.'

For just a moment the young man turned away, his face clouded with the shadows of a baffled mind. Then he looked Jerry straight in the eye.

'See here,' he said, 'you trust me, don't you? You believe that I want to act square by you and help you in this thing?'

'I do, sur,' said Jerry simply.

'Well, then, I tell you that O'Daly *can* be made to show

up, and the whole affair *can* be set straight, and the young lady—my cousin—*can* be put into her own again. Only I can't work in the dark. I can't play with a partner that "finesses" against me, as a whist-player would say. Now, who is this man here? I know he isn't your cousin any more than he is mine. What's his game?

Linsky took the words out of his puzzled companion's mouth.

'Tis a long story, sir,' he said, 'an' you'd be no wiser if you were told it. Some time, plase God, you'll know it all. Just now 'tis enough that I'm bound to this man and to The O'Mahony, who's away, an' perhaps dead an' buried, an' I'm heart an' sowl for doin' whatever I can to help the young lady. Only, if you'll not moind me sayin' so, she's her own worst inemy. If she takes the bit in her mouth this way, an' will go into the convint, how, in the name of Glory, are we to stop her, or do anything else?'

'There are more than fifteen hundred ways of working *that*!' replied the young man from Houghton County, simulating a confidence he did not wholly feel. 'But let's get along down toward the village.'

They entered Muirisc through the ancient convent churchyard, and at his doorway Jerry, as the visible result of much cogitation, asked the twain in. After offering them glasses of whisky-and-water and lighting a pipe, Jerry suddenly resolved upon a further extension of confidence. To Linsky's astonishment he took the lantern down from the wall, lighted it, and opened the door at the back of the bed.

'If you'll come along wid us, sir,' he said to Bernard, 'we'll show you something.'

'There, here we can talk at our aise,' he remarked again, when finally the three men were in the subterranean chamber, with the door closed behind them. 'Have you anything like *this* in Ameriky?'

Bernard was not so greatly impressed as they expected him to be. He strolled about the vault-like room, sounding the walls with his boot, pulling aside the bed-curtains and investigating the drain.

‘Curious old place,’ he said at last. ‘What’s the idea?’

‘Sure, ’tis a sacret place intoirely,’ explained Jerry. ‘Besides us three, there’s not a man aloive who knows of it, exceptin’ The O’Mahony, if be God’s grace he is aloive. ’Twas he discovered it. He’d the eyes of a hin-harrier for anny mark or sign in a wall. Well do I remimber our coming here first. He lukked it all over, as you’re doing. “Egor!” says he, “it may come in handy for O’Daly some day.” There was a dead man there on the bed, that dry ye c’u’d ’a’ loighted him wid a match.’

‘’Tis a part of the convint,’ Linsky took up the explanation, ‘an’ the chest there was full of deeds an’ riccords of the convint for manny cinturies. ’Twas me work for years to decipher an’ thranslate thim, unbeknownst to every soul in Muirisc. They were all in Irish.’

‘Yes, it’s a queer sort of hole,’ said Bernard musingly, walking over to the table and holding up one of the ancient manuscripts to the lamplight for investigation. ‘Why, this isn’t Irish, is it?’ he asked, after a moment’s scrutiny. ‘This is Latin.’

‘’Tis wan of half a dozen ye see there on the table that I couldn’t make out,’ said Linsky. ‘I’m no Latin scholar meself. ’Twas me intintion to foind someone outside who c’u’d thranslate thim.’

Bernard had kept his eyes on the faded parchment.

‘Odd,’ he said. ‘It’s from a Bishop—Matthew O’Finn seems to be the name——’

‘He was Bishop of Ross in the early part of the fourteenth cintury,’ put in Linsky.

‘And this thing is a warning to the nuns here to close up

their convent and take in no more novices, because the Church can't recognise them or their order. It's queer old Latin, but that's what I make it out to be.'

'Tis an illegant scholar ye are, sir !' exclaimed Jerry, in honest admiration.

'No,' said Bernard ; 'only they started me in for a priest, and I got to know Latin as well as I did English, or almost. But my godliness wasn't anywhere near high-water mark, and so I got switched off into engineering. I dare say the change was a good thing all around. If it's all the same to you,' he added, turning to Linsky, 'I'll put this parchment in my pocket for the time being. I want to look it over again more carefully. You shall have it back.'

The two Irishmen assented as a matter of course. This active-minded and capable young man, who had mining figures at his fingers' ends, and could read Latin, and talked lightly of fifteen hundred ways to outwit O'Daly, was obviously one to be obeyed without questions. They sat now and watched him with rapt eyes and acquiescent nods as he, seated on the table with foot on knee, recounted to them the more salient points of his interview with O'Daly.

'He was a dacent ould man when I knew him first,' mused Jerry in comment, 'an' as full of praises for The O'Mahonys as an egg is of mate. 'Tis the money that althered him ; an' thin that brat of a bye of his ! 'Tis since thin that he behaved like a nagur. An' 'tis my belafe, sir, that only for him Miss Katie 'd never have damed of interin' that thunderin' old convint. The very last toime I was wid him, Egor ! he druv us both from the house. 'Twas the nuns made Miss Katie return to him next day. 'Tis just that, sir, that she's no one else bechune thim nuns an' O'Daly, an' they do be tossin' her from wan to the other of 'em like a blessid ball.'

'The wonder to me is she's stood it for a minute,' said Bernard—'a proud girl like her.'

'Ah, sir,' said Jerry, 'it isn't like in Ameriky, where every wan's free to do what plases him. What was the girl to do? Where was she to go if she defied thim that was in authority over her? 'Tis aisy to talk, as manny's the toime she's said that same to me; but 'tis another matther to *do*!'

'There's the whole trouble in a nutshell,' said Bernard. 'Everybody around here talks, and nobody does anything.'

'There's truth in that, sir,' put in Linsky; 'but what are *you* proposin' to do? There were fifteen hundred ways, you said. What's wan of 'em?'

'Oh, there are fifteen hundred and two now,' responded Bernard, with a smile. 'You've helped me to two more since I've been down here; or, rather, this missing O'Mahony of yours has helped me to one, and I helped myself to the other.'

The two stared in helpless bewilderment at the young man.

'That O'Mahony seems to have been a right smart chap,' Bernard continued. 'No wonder he made things hum here in Muirisc. And a prophet, too. Why, the very first time he ever laid eyes on this cave here, by your own telling, he saw just what it was going to be good for.'

'I don't folly ye,' said the puzzled Jerry.

'Why, to put O'Daly in, of course,' answered the young man lightly. 'That's as plain as the nose on your face.'

'Egor! 'Tis a grand idea, that same!' exclaimed Jerry, slapping his thigh. 'Only,' he added, with a sinking enthusiasm, 'suppose he wouldn't come?'

Bernard laughed outright.

'That'll be easy enough. All you have to do is to send word you want to see him in your place upstairs. When he comes tell him there's a strange discovery you've made.

Bring him down here; let him in, and while he's looking around him just slip out and shut the door on him. I notice it's got a spring-lock from the outside. A thoughtful man, that O'Mahony! Of course you'll want to bring down enough food and water to last a week or so, first; perhaps a little whisky, too. And I'd carry up all these papers, moreover, and put 'em in your room above. Until the old man got quieted down, he might feel disposed to tear things.

'Egor! I'll do it!' cried Jerry, with sparkling eyes and a grin on his broad face. 'Oh, the art of man!'

The pallid and near-sighted Linsky was less alive to the value of this bold plan.

'An' what'll ye do nixt?' he asked doubtfully.

'I've got a scheme which I'll carry out to-morrow by myself,' said Bernard. 'It'll take me all day; and by the time I turn up the day after you must have O'Daly safely bottled up down here. Then I'll be in a position to read the Riot Act to everybody. First we'll stand the convent on its head, and then I'll come down here and have a little confidential talk with O'Daly about going to prison as a fraudulent trustee.'

'Sir, you're well-named O'Mahony,' said Jerry, with beaming earnestness. 'I do be almost believin' ye're *his* son!'

Bernard chuckled as he sprang off the table to his feet.

'There might be even stranger things than that,' he said, and laughed again.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VICTORY OF THE 'CATHACH.'

ONE day passed, and then another, and the evening of the third day drew near, yet brought no returning Bernard. It is true that on the second day a telegram—the first Jerry had ever received in his life — came bearing date from Cashel, and containing only the unsigned injunction :

‘ Don’t be afraid.’

It is all very well to say this, but Jerry and Linsky read over the brief message many scores of times that day, and still felt themselves very much afraid.

Muirisc was stirred by unwonted excitement. In all its history the village had never resented anything else quite so much as the establishment of a police barrack in its principal street, a dozen years before. The inhabitants had long since grown accustomed to the sight of the sergeant and his four men lounging about the place, and had even admitted them to a kind of conditional friendship, but none the less their presence had continued to present itself as an affront to Muirisc. From one year’s end to another no suspicion of crime had darkened the peaceful fame of the hamlet. They had heard vague stories of grim and violent deeds in other parts of the south and west, as the failure of the potatoes and the greed of the landlords conspired to-

gether to drive the peasantry into revolt ; but in Muirisc, though she had had her evictions and knew what it was to be hungry, it had occurred to no one to so much as break a window.

Yet now, all at once, here were fresh constables brought in from Bantry, with an inspector at their head, and the amazed villagers saw these new-comers, with rifles slung over their short capes, and little round caps cocked to one side on their close-cropped heads, impudently ransacking every nook and cranny of the ancient town in quest of some mysterious thing, the while others spread their search over the ragged rocks and moorland roundabout. And then the astounding report flew from mouth to mouth that Father Jago had read in his *Freeman* from Dublin that O'Daly was believed to have been murdered.

Sure enough, now that they thought of it, O'Daly had not been seen for two or three days ; but until this strange story came from without, no one had given this a thought. He was often away, for days together, on mining and other business, but it was said now that his wife, whom Muirisc still thought of as Mrs. Fergus, had given the alarm, on the ground that if her husband had been going away over-night he would have told her. There was less liking for this lady than ever when this report started on its rounds.

Three or four of the wretched, unwashed, and half-fed creatures, who had fled from O'Daly's evictions to the shelter of the furze-clad ditches outside, had been brought in and sharply questioned at the barracks on this third day, but of what they had said the villagers knew nothing. And now, toward evening, the excited groups of gossiping neighbours at the corners saw Jerry Higgins himself, with flushed face and apprehensive eye, being led past with his shambling cousin towards constabulary headquarters by a squad of armed policemen. Close upon the heels of this amazing

spectacle came the rumour—whence started, who could tell?—that Jerry had during the day received a telegram clearly implicating him in the crime. At this Muirisc groaned aloud.

‘’Tis with you alone I want to spake,’ said Kate bluntly, to the mother superior.

The April twilight was deepening the shadows in the corners of the convent’s reception hall, and mellowing into a uniformity of ugliness the faces of the four Misses O’Daly who sat on the long bench before the fireless hearth. These young women were strangers to Muirisc, and had but yesterday arrived from their country homes in Kerry or the Macroom district to enter the convent of which their remote relation was now patron. They were plain, small-farmers’ daughters, with flat faces, high cheek-bones, and red hands. They had risen in clumsy humility when Kate entered the room, staring in admiration at her beauty, and even more at her hat; they had silently seated themselves again at a sign from the mother superior, still staring in round-eyed wonder at this novel kind of young woman; and they clung now stolidly to their bench, in the face of Kate’s remark. Perhaps they did not comprehend it. But they understood and obeyed the almost contemptuous gesture by which the aged nun bade them leave the room.

‘What is it thin, *Dubhdeasa*?’ asked Mother Agnes with affectionate gravity, seating herself as she spoke. The burden of eighty years rested lightly upon the lean figure and thin, wax-like face of the nun. Only a close glance would have revealed the fine network of wrinkles covering this pallid skin, and her shrewd, observant eyes flashed still with the keenness of youth. ‘Tell me, what is it?’

‘I’ve a broken heart in me, that’s all,’ said the girl.

She had walked to one of the two narrow little windows,

and stood looking out, yet seeing nothing for the mist of tears that might not be kept down. Only the affectation of defiance preserved her voice from breaking.

'Here there will be rest and pace of mind,' intoned the other. ''Tis only a day more, Katie, and thin ye'll be wan of us, wid all the worriments and throubles of the world laygues behind ye.'

The girl shook her head with vehemence and paced the stone floor restlessly.

''Tis I who 'll be opening the dure to 'em and bringing 'em all in here instead. No fear, Mother Agnes, they'll follow me wherever I go.'

The other smiled gently, and shook her veiled head in turn.

''Tis little a child like you drames of the rale throubles of life,' she murmured. 'Whin ye're older, ye'll bless the good day that gave ye this holy refuge, and saved ye from them all. Oh, Katie darlin', when I see you standing be me side in your habit—'tis mesilf has had it made be the Miss Maguires in Skibbereen, the same that sews the vest-mints for the bishop himself—I can lay me down, and say me *Nunc Dimittis* wid a thankful heart!'

Kate sighed deeply and turned away. It was the trusting sweetness of affection with which old Mother Agnes had enveloped her, ever since the definite promise to take vows had been wrung from her reluctant tongue, that rose most effectually always to restrain her from reconsidering that promise. It was clear enough that the venerable O'Mahony nuns found in the speedy prospect of her joining them the one great controlling joy of their lives. Thinking upon this now, it was natural enough for her to say:

'Can thim O'Daly girls rade and write, I wonder?'

'Oh, they've had schooling, all of them. 'Tis not what you had here, be anny manes, but 'twill do.'

'Just think, Mother Agnes,' Kate burst forth, 'what it'll be like to be shut with such craytures as thim afther—afther you lave us!'

'They're very humble,' said the nun hesitatingly. 'Tis more of that same spirit I'd fain be seeing in yourself, Katie! And in that they've small enough resimblance to Cormac O'Daly, who's raked 'em up from the highways and byways to make their profession here. And oh—tell me now—old Ellen that brings the milk mintioned to Sister Blanaid that O'Daly was gone somewhere, and that there was talk about it.'

'Talk, is it?' exclaimed Kate, whose introspective mood had driven this subject from her mind, but who now spoke with eagerness. 'That's the word for it—"talk." 'Tis me mother, for pure want of something to say, that putt the notion into Sergeant O'Flaherty's thick skull, and, w'u'd ye believe it? they've brought more police into the town, and they're worriting the lives out of the people with questions and suspicions. I'm told they've even gone out to the bog and arrested some of thim poor wretches of O'Driscolls that Cormac putt out of their cottages last winter. The idea of it!'

'Where there's so much smoke there's some bit of fire,' said the older woman. 'Where *is* O'Daly?'

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

'Tis not my affair,' she said curtly. 'I know where he'd be if I'd my will.'

'Katie!' chanted the nun in tender reproof, 'what spirit d'ye call that for a woman who's within four-an'-twinty hours of making her profession? Pray for yoursilf, child, that these worldly feelings may be taken from ye!'

'Mother Agnes,' said the girl, 'if I'm to pretind to love Cormac O'Daly, thin, wance for all, 'tis no use!'

'We're bidden to love all thim that despite——'

The nun broke off her quotation abruptly. A low wailing sound from the bowels of the earth beneath them rose through the flags of the floor, and filled the chamber with a weird and ghostly dying-away echo. Mother Agnes sprang to her feet.

'Tis the Hostage again !' she cried. 'Sister Maev vowed to me she heard him through the night. Did *you* hear him just now ?'

'I heard *it*,' said Kate simply.

The mother superior, upon reflection, seated herself again.

'Tis a strange business,' she said at last. Her shrewd eyes, wandering in a meditative gaze about the chamber, avoided Katie's face. 'Tis twelve years since last we heard him,' she mused aloud, 'and that was the night of the great storm. 'Tis a sign of misfortune to hear him, they say—and the blowing down of the walls that toime was taken be us to fulfil that same. But, sure, within the week The O'Mahony had gone on his thravels, and pious Cormac O'Daly had taken his place, and the convint prospered more than ever. At laste, *that* was no misfortune.'

'Hark to me, Mother Agnes,' said Kate with emphasis. 'You never used to favour The O'Mahony, as well I remember ; but you're a fair-minded woman and a holy woman, and I challenge ye now to tell me honest : Wasn't anny wan hair on The O'Mahony's head worth the whole carcase of Cormac O'Daly ? 'Twas an evil day for Muirisc whin he sailed away. If the convint has prospered, my word ! 'tis what nothing else in Muirisc has done ! And leaving aside your office as nun, is it speaking well for a place to say that three old women in it are better off and all the rist have suffered ?'

'Katie !' admonished the other. 'You'll repint thim words a week hence ! To hearken to ye, wan would think your heart was not in the profession ye're to make.'

The girl gave a scornful little laugh.

'Did I ever pretend it was?' she demanded.

'Tis you are the contrary crayture!' sighed the mother superior. 'Here now for all these centuries, through all the storms and wars and confiscations, this holy house has stood firm be the old faith. There's not another ancient family in Ireland has kept the Mass in its own chapel, with its own nuns kneeling before it, and never a break or interruption at all. I'll leave it to your own sense. Can you compare the prosperity of a little village, or a hundred of 'em, with such a glorious and unquailed record as that? Why, girl, 'tis you should be proud beyond measure, and thankful that you're born and bred and selected to carry on such a grand tradition. To be head of the convent of the O'Mahonys—'tis more historically splendid than to be Queen of England!'

'But if I come to be the head at all,' retorted Kate, 'sure it will be a convent of O'Dalys.'

The venerable woman heaved another sigh and looked at the floor in silence.

Kate pursued her advantage eagerly.

'Sure, I've my full share of pride in proper things,' she said, 'and no O'Mahony of them all ever held his family higher in his mind than I do. And my blood leaps to every word you say about that same. But would *you*—Agnes O'Mahony as you were born—would you be asking me to have pride in the O'Dalys? And that's what 'tis intended to make of the convent now. For my part, I'd be for saying: "Leave the convent die now with the last of the ladies of our own family, rather than keep it alive at the expense of giving it to the O'Dalys."'

Mother Agnes shook her head.

'I've my carnal feelings no less than you,' she said, 'and my family pride to subdue. But even if the victory of

humility were denied me, what c'u'd we do? For the moment I'll put this holy house to wan side. What can *you* do? How can you stand up forninst Cormac O'Daly's determination? Remimber, widout him ye're but a homeless gerrel, Katie.'

'And whose fault is that, Mother Agnes?' asked Kate, with swift glance and tone. 'Will you be telling me 'twas The O'Mahony's? Did he leave me without a fourpenny bit, depindent on others, or was it that others stole me money and deceived me, and to-day are keeping me out of me own? Tell me that, Mother Agnes!'

The nun's ivory-tinted face flushed for an instant, then took on a deeper pallor. Her gaze, lifted momentarily toward Kate, strayed beyond her to vacancy. She rose to her full height and made a forward step, then stood fumbling confusedly at her beads, and with trembling, half-opened lips.

''Tis not in me power,' she stammered, slowly and with difficulty. 'There—there *was* something—I've not thought of it for so long—I'm forgetting strangely——'

She broke off abruptly, threw up her withered hands in a gesture of despair, and then, never looking at the girl, turned and with bowed head left the room.

Kate still stood staring in mingled amazement and apprehension at the arched casement through which Mother Agnes had vanished, when the oak door was pushed open again, and Sister Blanaid, a smaller and younger woman, yet bent and half palsied under the weight of years, showed herself in the aperture. She bore in her arms, shoving the door aside with it as she feebly advanced, a square wooden box, dust-begrimed and covered in part with reddish cow-skin.

'Take it away!' she mumbled. ''Tis the mother supayrior's desire you should take it from here. 'Tis an evil

day that's on us ! Go fling this haythen box into the say, and thin pray for yoursilf and for her, who's taken that grief for ye she's at death's door !'

The door closed again, and Kate found herself mechanically bearing this box in her arms and making her way out through the darkened hallways to the outer air. Only when she stood on the steps of the porch and set down her burden to adjust her hat did she recognise it. Then, with a murmuring cry of delight, she stooped and snatched it up again. It was the *cathach* which The O'Mahony had given her to keep.

On the instant, as she looked out across the open green upon the harbour, the bay, the distant peninsula of Kilcrohane peacefully gathering to itself the shadows of the falling twilight—how it all came back to her ! On the day of his departure—that memorable black-letter day in her life—he had turned over this rude little chest to her ; he had told her it was his luck, his talisman, and now should be hers. She had carried it, not to her mother's home, but to the tiny schoolroom in the old convent, for safe keeping. She recalled 'now that she had told the nuns, or Mother Agnes, at least, what it was. But then—then there came a blank in her memory. She could not force her mind to remember when she ceased to think about it—when it made its way into the lumber-room, where it had apparently lain so long.

But, at all events, she had it now again. She bent her head to touch with her lips one of the rough strips of skin nailed irregularly upon it ; then with a shining face, bearing the box like some sanctified shrine against her breast, she moved across the village common toward the wharf and the water.

The injunction of quavering old Blanaid to cast it into the bay drifted uppermost in her thoughts, and she smiled

to herself. She had been bidden also to pray ; and reflection upon this chased the smile away. Truly, there was need for prayer. Her perplexed mind called up, one by one, in disheartening array, the miseries of her position, and drew new unhappiness from the confusion of right and wrong which they presented. How could she pray to be delivered from what Mother Agnes held up as the duties of piety? And, on the other hand, what sincerity could there be in any other kind of spiritual petition?

She wandered along the shore sands under the cliffs, the box tightly clasped in her arms, her eyes musingly bent upon the brown reaches of drenched seaweed which lay at play with the receding tide.

The moist pods broke crackling under her feet as she walked ; she paused to turn over with the toe of her boot a starfish that had been stranded topsy-turvy. There were dead men's bones in this box, he had said, she recalled. What was life itself but dead men's bones? The very beach on which she walked was strewn with the bleached shells and waste of the sea's creatures, slain in myriads by every wanton tide which lifted itself toward the heedless moon. Of all things, naught was sure but death.

From sheer perversity her mind conjured up at this the image of a smiling and ruddy young face, sun-burned and thatched with crisp, curly brown hair—the face of that curious young O'Mahony from Houghton County. His blue eye looked at her half quizzically, half beseeching, but Kate resolutely drove the image away. He was only the merest trifle less mortal than the others.

So musing, she strolled onward. Suddenly she stopped, and lifted her head triumphantly ; the smile had flashed forth again upon her face, and the dark eyes were all aglow. A thought had come to her, so convincing, so unanswerable,

so joyously uplifting, that she paused to marvel at having been blind to it so long.

It was clearly kind fate which had given this *cathach* to her from Sister Blanaid's clumsy, trembling old hands, and which, through the aged nun's toothless mumbling, had bidden her come out to pray. And clear as noon sunlight on Mount Gabriel was it, too, what she should pray for.

What *could* it ever have been, this one crowning object of prayer, but the return of The O'Mahony?

As her mental vision adapted itself to the radiance of this revelation, the abstracted glance which she had allowed to wander over the bay was arrested by a concrete object. Two hundred yards from the water's edge a strange vessel had heaved to and was casting anchor. Kate could hear the chain rattling out from the capstan even as she looked.

The sight sent all prayerful thoughts scurrying out of her head. The presence of vessels of the size of the new-comer was in itself most unusual at Muirisc. But Kate's practised eye noticed a strange novelty. The craft, though thick of beam and ungainly in line, carried the straight-running bowsprit of a cutter, and in addition to its cutter-sheets had a jigger lug-sail. The girl watched these eccentric sails as they were dropped and reefed, with a curious sense of having seen them somewhere before, as if in a vision or some old picture-book of childhood. Confused memories stirred within her as she gazed, and held her mind in day-dream captivity. A figure she seemed vaguely to know stood now at the gunwale.

The spell was rudely broken by a wild shout from the cliff close above her. On the instant, amid a clatter of falling stones and a veritable landslide of sand, rocks, and turf, a human figure came rolling, clambering, and tumbling down the declivity and ran toward her, its arms stretched

and waving with frantic gestures, and emitting inarticulate cries and groans as it came.

The astonished girl instinctively raised the box in her hands to use it as a missile. But, lo ! it was old Murphy, who, half stumbling to his knees at her feet, fiercely clutched her skirts and pointed in a frenzy of excitement seaward.

'Wid your own eyes look at it—look at it, Miss Katie !' he screamed. 'Ye can see it yoursilf ! It's not draming I am !'

'It's drunk ye are instead, thin, Murphy !' said the girl sharply, though in great wonderment.

'Wid joy—wid joy I'm drunk !' the old man shouted, dancing on the sands and slippery sea-litter like one possessed, and whirling his arms about his head.

'Murphy, man, what ails ye ? In the name of the Lord, what——'

The browned, wild-eyed, ragged old madman had started at a headlong pace across the wet waste of weeds, and plunged now through the breakers, wading with long strides knee-deep, then immersed to the waist. He turned for an instant to shout back :

'I'll shwim to him if I drown for it ! *'Tis the masther come back !*'

The girl fell to her knees on the sand, then reverently bowed her head till it rested upon the box before her.

CHAPTER X.

BERNARD'S GOOD CHEER.

'SORRA a wink o' sleep could I get the night,' groaned the wife of O'Daly--Mrs. Fergus--'what with me man murdered, an' me daughter drowned, an' me nerves that distracted 'twas past the power of hot dhrink to abate 'em !'

It was early morning in the reception-hall of the convent. The old nuns sat on their bench in a row, blinking in the bright light which poured through the casement as they gazed at their visitor, and tortured their unworldly wits over the news she brought. The young chaplain, Father Jago, had come in from the Mass, still wearing soutane and biretta. He leaned his burly weight against the mantel, smiling inwardly at thoughts of breakfast, but keeping his heavy face drawn in solemn lines to fit these grievous tidings.

The mother superior sighed despairingly, and spoke in low, quavering tones.

'Here, too, no one slept a wink,' she said. 'Ah, thin, 'tis too much sorrow for us ! By rayson of our years we've no stringth to bear it.'

'Ah, sure, 'tis different wid you,' remarked Mrs. Fergus. 'You've no proper notion of the maning of sleep. Faith,

all your life you've been wakened bechune naps by your prayer-bell. 'Tis no throuble to you. You're accustomed to 't. But wid me, if I've me rest broken, I'm killed entirely. 'Tis me nerves !

'Ay, them nerves of yours—did I ever hear of 'em before?' put in Mother Agnes, with a momentary gleam of carnal delight in combat on her waxen face. Then sadness resumed its sway. 'Aye, aye, Katie, Katie !' she moaned, slowly shaking her veiled head. 'Child of our prayers, daughter of the White Foam, pride of the O'Mahonys, darlin' of our hearts ! what ailed ye to lave us ?'

The mother superior's words quavered upward into a wail as they ended. The sound awakened the ancestral 'keening' instinct in the other aged nuns, and stirred the thin blood in their veins. They broke forth in weird lamentations.

'Her hair was the glory of Desmond, that weighty and that fine !' chanted Sister Maev. 'Ah, *wirra, wirra !*'

'She had it from me,' said Mrs. Fergus, her hand straying instinctively to her crimps. Her voice had caught the mourning infection : 'Ah-hoo ! Katie *Avourneen !*' she wailed in vocal sympathy. 'Come back to us, darlint !'

'She'd the neck of the Swan of the Lake of Three Castles !' mumbled Sister Blanaid. "'Twas that same was said of Grace O'Sullivan, the bride of The O'Mahony of Ballydivlin, an' he was kilt on the strand benayth the walls, an' she lookin' on wid her grand black eyes——'

'Is it floatin' in the waves ye are, *ma creevin' cno*, wid the fishes surroundin' ye?' sobbed Mrs. Fergus.

Sister Blanaid's thick tongue took up the keening again :

"'Twas I druv her out ! "Go 'long wid ye now," says I, "an' trow that haythen box o' yours into the say !" An' she went and t'rew her purty self in instead. Woe an' prosthraction to this house ! an' may the Lord——'

Father Jago at this took his elbow from the mantel and straightened himself.

'Whisht now, aisy!' he said, in a tone of parental authority. 'There's modheration in all things. Sure, ye've not a scintilla of evidence that there's annyone dead at all. Where's the sinse of laminting a loss ye're not sure of—and that, too, on an impty stomach?'

'Never bite or sup more will I take till I've tidings of her!' said the mother superior.

'The more rayson why I'll not be waiting longer for ye now,' commented the priest; and with this he left the room.

As he closed the door behind him a grateful odour of frying bacon momentarily spread upon the air. Mrs. Fergus sniffed it, and half rose from her seat; but the nuns clung resolutely to their theme, and she sank back again.

''Tis my belafe,' Sister Maev began, 'that voice we heard, 'tis from no Hostage at all—'tis the banshee of The O'Mahonys.'

The mother superior shook her head.

'Is it likely, thin, Maev O'Mahony,' she queried, 'that *our* banshee would be distressed for an O'Daly? Sure, the noise ye mintion was made whin Cormac himself disappeared.'

'His marryin' me—'tis clear enough that putt him in the family,' said Mrs. Fergus. ''Twould be flat injustice to me to lave my man go an' never a keen raised for him. I'll stand on me rights for that much, Agnes O'Mahony.'

'A fine confusion ye'd have of it, thin,' retorted the mother superior. 'The O'Dalys have their own banshee—she's set up her keen in Kilcrohane these hundreds of years—and for ours to be meddlin' because she's merely related by marriage—sure, 'twould not be endured.'

The dubious problem of a family banshee's duties has

never been elucidated beyond this point, for on the instant there came a violent ringing of the big bell outside, the hoarse clangour of which startled the women into excited silence. A minute later the white-capped lame old woman-servant threw open the door.

A young man, with a ruddy, smiling face and a carriage of boyish confidence, entered the room. He cast an inquiring glance over the group. Then, recognising Mrs. Fergus, he gave a little exclamation of pleasure, and advanced toward her with outstretched hand.

'Why, how do you do, Mrs. O'Daly?' he exclaimed, cordially shaking her hand. 'Pray keep your seat. I'm just playing in luck to find *you* here. Won't you—eh—be kind enough to—eh—introduce me?'

'Tis a young gintleman from Ameriky—Mr. O'Mahony by name,' Mrs. Fergus stammered, flushed with satisfaction in his remembrance, but doubtful as to the attitude of the nuns.

The Ladies of the Hostage's Tears had drawn themselves into as much dignified erectness as their age and infirmities permitted. They eyed this amazing new-comer in mute surprise. Mother Agnes, after the first shock at the invasion, nodded frostily in acknowledgment of his respectful bow.

'Get around an' spake to her in her north ear,' whispered Mrs. Fergus. 'She can't hear ye in the other.'

Bernard had been long enough in West Carbery to comprehend her meaning. In that strange old district there is no right or left, no front or back—only points of the compass. A gesture from Mrs. Fergus helped him now to guess where the pole star might lie in matters auricular.

'I didn't stand on ceremony,' he said loudly, laying his hat on the table and drawing off his gloves. 'I've driven over post-haste from Skibbereen this morning—the car's

outside—and I rushed in here the first thing. I—I hope sincerely that I'm in time.'

'“In toime?”' the superior repeated, in a tone of annoyed mystification. 'That depinds entoirely, sir, on your own intintions. I've no information, sir, as to either who you are or what you're afther doing.'

'No, of course not,' said Bernard, in affable apology. 'I ought to have thought of that. I'll explain things, ma'am, if you'll permit me. As I said, I've just raced over this morning from Skibbereen.'

Mother Agnes made a stately inclination of her veiled head.

'You had a grand morning for your drive,' she said.

'I didn't notice,' the young man replied, with a frank smile. 'I was too busy thinking of something else. The truth is, I spent last evening with the Bishop.'

Again the mother superior bowed slightly.

'An estimable man,' she remarked coldly.

'Oh yes; nothing could have been friendlier,' pursued Bernard, 'than the way he treated me. And the day before that I was at Cashel, and had a long talk with the Archbishop. He's a splendid old gentleman, too. Not the least sign of airs or nonsense about him.'

Mother Agnes rose.

'I'm deloighted to learn that our higher clergy prodhuce so favourable an impression upon you,' she said gravely; 'but, if you'll excuse us, sir, this is a house of mourning, and our hearts are heavy wid grief, and we're not in precisely the mood——'

Bernard spoke in an altered tone:

'Oh! I beg a thousand pardons! Mourning, did you say? May I ask——'

Mrs. Fergus answered his unspoken question:

'Don't you know it, thin? 'Tis me husband, Cormac

O'Daly. Sure he's murdered an' his body's nowhere to be found, an' the poliss are scourin' all the counthry round-about, an' there's a long account of 't in the *Freeman* sint from Bantry, an' more poliss have been dhrafted into Muirisc, an' they've arrested Jerry Higgins and that long-shanked, shiverin' *omadhaun* of a cousin of his. 'Tis known they had a tellygram warnin' thim not to be afraid——'

'Oh, by George! Well, this *is* rich!'

The young man's spontaneous exclamations brought the breathless narrative of Mrs. Fergus to an abrupt stop. The women gazed at him in stupefaction. His rosy and juvenile face had, at her first words, worn a wondering and puzzled expression. Gradually, as she went on, a light of comprehension had dawned in his eyes. Then he had broken in upon her catalogue of woes with a broad grin on his face.

'I-gad! this *is* rich!' he repeated.

He put his hands in his pockets, withdrew them, and then took a few steps up and down the room, chuckling deeply to himself.

The power of speech came first to Mother Agnes.

'If 'tis to insult our griefs you've come, young sir,' she began; 'if that's your maning——'

'Bless your heart, madam!' Bernard protested. 'I'd be the last man in the world to dream of such a thing. I've too much respect. I've an aunt who is a religious myself. No, what I mean is—it's all a joke—that is, a mistake. O'Daly isn't dead at all.'

'What's that you're sayin'?' put in Mrs. Fergus sharply. 'Me man is aloive, ye say?'

'Why, of course'—the youngster went off into a fresh fit of chuckling—'of course he is—alive and kicking. Yes, especially kicking!'

'The Lord's mercy on us!' said the mother superior. 'And where would Cormac be, thin?'

'Well, that's another matter. I don't know that I can tell you just now; but, take my word for it, he's as alive as I am, and he's perfectly safe, too.'

The astonished pause which followed was broken by the mumbling monologue of poor half-palsied Sister Blanaid:

'I putt the box in her hands, an' I says, says I: "Away wid ye now, an' t'row it into the say!" An' thin she wint.'

The other women exchanged startled glances. In their excitement they had forgotten about Kate.

Before they could speak Bernard, with a mystified glance at the spluttering old lady, had taken up the subject of her frightened thoughts.

'But what I came for,' he said, looking from one to the other—'what I was specially in a stew about, was to get here before—before Miss Kate had taken her vows. The ceremony was set down for to-day, as I understand. Perhaps I'm wrong; but that's why I asked if I was in time.'

'You *are* in time,' answered Mother Agnes solemnly.

Her sepulchral tone jarred upon the young man's ear. Looking into the speaker's pallid, veil-framed face, he was troubled vaguely by a strange, almost sinister significance in her glance.

'You're in fine time,' the mother superior repeated, and bowed her head.

'Man alive!' Mrs. Fergus exclaimed, rising and leaning toward him. 'You've no sinse of what you're saying. Me daughter's gone, too!'

'"Gone!" How gone? What do you mean?'

Bernard gazed in blank astonishment into the vacuous face of Mrs. Fergus. Mechanically he strode toward her and took her hand firmly in his.

'Where has she gone to?' he demanded, as his scattered wits came under control again. 'Do you mean that she's run away? Can't you speak?'

Mrs. Fergus, thus stoutly adjured, began to whimper :

'They sint her from here—'twas always harsh they were wid her—ye heard Sister Blanaid yerself say they sint her—an' out she wint to walk under the cliffs—some b'yes of Peggy Clancy saw her go—an' she never came back through the long night—an' me wid no wink o' sleep—an' me nerves that bad !'

Overcome by her emotions, Mrs. Fergus, her hand still in Bernard's grasp, bent forward till her crimps rested on the young man's shoulder. She moved her forehead gingerly about till it seemed certain that the ornaments were sustaining no injury. Then she gave her maternal feelings full sway and sobbed with fervour against the coat of the young man from Houghton County.

'Don't cry, Mrs. O'Daly,' was all Bernard could think of to say.

The démonstration might perhaps have impressed him had he not perforce looked over the weeping lady's head straight into the face of the mother superior. There he saw written such contemptuous incredulity that he himself became conscious of scepticism.

'*Don't* take on so !' he urged, this time less gently, and strove to disengage himself.

But Mrs. Fergus clung to his hand and resolutely buried her face against his collar. Sister Maev had risen to her feet beside Mother Agnes, and he heard the two nuns sniff indignantly. Then he realized that the situation was ridiculous.

'What is it you suspect ?' he asked of the mother superior, eager to make a diversion of some kind. 'You can't be imagining that harm's come to Miss Kate—that she's drowned ?' •

'That same *was* our belafe,' said Mother Agnes, glaring icily upon him and his sobbing burden.

'The inference clearly was that the spectacle before her affronted eyes had been enough to overturn all previous convictions, of whatever character.

Bernard hesitated no longer. He almost wrenched his hand free, and then firmly pushed Mrs. Fergus away.

'It's all nonsense,' he said, assuming a confidence he did not wholly feel. 'She's no more drowned than I am.'

'Faith, I had me fears for *you*, wid such a dale of tears let loose upon ye,' remarked Mother Agnes drily.

The young man looked straight into the reverend countenance of the superior, and confided to it an audacious wink.

'I'll be back in no time,' he said, taking up his hat. 'Now, don't you fret another bit. She's all right. I know it. And I'll go and find her.'

And with that he was gone.

An ominous silence pervaded the reception hall. The two nuns, still standing, stared with wrathful severity at Mrs. Fergus. She bore their gaze with but an indifferent show of composure, patting her disordered crimps with an awkward hand, and then moving aimlessly across the room.

'I'll be going now, I'm thinking,' she said at last, yet lingered in spite of her words.

The nuns looked slowly at one another, and uttered not a word.

'Well, thin, 'tis small comfort I have, anny way, or consolation either, from the lot of ye,' Mrs. Fergus felt impelled to remark, drawing her shawl up on her head and walking toward the door. 'An' me wid all me throubles, an' me nerves.'

'Is it consolation you're afther?' retorted Mother Agnes bitterly. 'I haven't the proper kind of shoulder on me for *your* variety of consolation.'

'Thrue, ye have it, Agnes O'Mahony,' Mrs. Fergus replied,

with her hand on the latch. 'An' by the same token, thim shoulders were small consolation to yourself till you got your nun's veil to hide 'em !'

When she had flounced her way out, the mother superior remained standing, her gaze bent upon the floor.

'Sister Maev,' she said at last, 'me powers are failing me. 'Tis time I laid down me burden. For the first time in my life I was unayqual to her impiddence.'

CHAPTER XI.

THE RESIDENT MAGISTRATE.

WHEN Bernard O'Mahony found himself outside the convent gateway he paused to consider matters.

The warm spring sunlight so broadly enveloped the square in which he stood, the shining white cottages and gray old walls behind him and the harbour and pale-blue placid bay beyond, in its grateful radiance, that it was not in nature to think gloomy thoughts. And nothing in the young man's own nature tended that way, either.

Yet as he stopped short, looked about him, and even took off his hat to better ponder the situation, he saw that it was much more complicated than he had thought. His plan of campaign had rested upon two bold strategic actions. He had deemed them extremely smart at the time of their invention. Both had been put into execution, and lo ! the state of affairs was worse than ever.

The problem had been to thwart and overturn O'Daly and to prevent Kate from entering the convent. These two objects were so intimately connected and dependent one upon the other, that it had been impossible to separate them in procedure. He had caused O'Daly to be immured in secrecy in the underground cell, the while he went off to secure episcopal interference in the convent's plans. His

journey had been crowned with entire success. It had involved a trip to Cashel, it is true, but he had obtained an order forbidding the Ladies of the Hostage's Tears to add to their numbers. Returning in triumph with his invincible weapon, he discovered now that O'Daly's disappearance had been placarded all over Ireland as a murder, that his two allies were in custody as suspected assassins, and that—most puzzling and disturbing feature of it all—Kate herself had vanished.

He did not attach a moment's credence to the drowning theory. Daughters of the Coast of White Foam did not get drowned. Nor was it likely that other harm had befallen a girl so capable, so self-reliant, so thoroughly at home in all the districts round about. Obviously she was in hiding somewhere in the neighbourhood. The question was where to look for her. Or would it be better to take up the other branch of the problem first?

His perplexed gaze, roaming vaguely over the broad space, was all at once arrested by a gleam of flashing light in motion. Concentrating his attention, he saw that it came from the polished barrel of a rifle borne on the arm of a constable at the corner of the square. He put on his hat and walked briskly over to this corner. The constable had gone, and Bernard followed him up the narrow, winding street to the barracks.

As he walked he noted knots of villagers clustered about the cottage doors, evidently discussing some topic of popular concern. In the roadway before the barracks were drawn up two outside cars. A policeman in uniform occupied the driver's seat on each, and half a dozen others lounged about in the sunshine by the gate-posts, their rifles slung over their backs and their round, visorless caps cocked aggressively over their ears. These gentry bent upon him a general scowl as he walked past them and into the barracks.

A dapper, dark-faced, exquisitely-dressed young gentleman, wearing slate-tinted gloves and with a flower in his button-hole, stood in the hallway, two burly constables assisting him meanwhile to get into a light, silk-lined top-coat.

'Come, you fool! Hold the sleeve lower down, can't you, idiot?' this young gentleman cried testily, as Bernard entered. The two constables divided the epithets between them humbly, and perfected their task.

'I want to see the officer in charge here,' said Bernard, prepared by this for discourtesy.

The young gentleman glanced him over, and on the instant altered his demeanour.

'I am Major Snaffle, the Resident Magistrate,' he said with great politeness. 'I've only a minute to spare—I'm driving over to Bantry with some prisoners—but if you'll come this way——' And without further words he led the other into a room off the hall, the door of which the two constables rushed to obsequiously open.

'I dare say those are the prisoners I have come to talk about,' remarked Bernard, when the door had closed behind them. He noted that this was the first comfortably furnished room he had seen in Ireland, as he took the seat indicated by the major's gesture.

Major Snaffle lifted his brows slightly at this, and fastened his bright brown eyes in a keen, searching glance upon Bernard's face.

'H'm—m!' he said. 'You are an American, I perceive.'

'Yes—my name's O'Mahony. I come from Michigan.'

At sound of this Milesian cognomen the glance of the stipendiary grew keener still, if possible, and the corners of his carefully trimmed little moustache were drawn sharply down. There was less politeness in the manner and tone of his next inquiry.

'Well, what is your business? What do you want to say about them?'

'First of all,' said Bernard, 'let's be sure we're talking about the same people. 'You've got two men under arrest here—Jerry Higgins of this place, and a cousin of his from—from Boston, I think it is.'

The major nodded, and kept his sharp gaze on the other's countenance unabated.

'What of that?' he asked, now almost brusquely.

'Well, I only drove in this morning—I'm in the mining business myself—but I understand they've been arrested for the m——, that is, on account of the disappearance of old Mr. O'Daly.'

The Resident Magistrate did not assent by so much as a word.

'Well, what's that to you?' he queried coldly.

'It's this much to me,' Bernard retorted, not with entire good temper, 'that O'Daly isn't dead at all.'

Major Snaffle's eyebrows went up still further with a little jerk. He hesitated for a moment, then said:

'I hope you know the importance of what you are saying. We don't like to be fooled with.'

'The fooling has been done by those who started the story that he was murdered,' remarked Bernard.

'One must always be prepared for that—at some stage of a case—among these Irish,' said the Resident Magistrate.

'I've only been in Ireland two years, but I know their lying tricks as well as if I'd been born among them. Service in India helps one to understand all the inferior races.'

'I haven't been here even two months,' said the young man from Houghton County, 'but, so far as I can figure it out, the Irishmen who do the bulk of the lying wear uniforms and monkey-caps like paper-collar boxes perched over one ear. The police, I mean.'

'We won't discuss *that*,' put in the Major peremptorily.
'Do you know where O'Daly is?'

'Yes, sir, I do,' answered Bernard.

'Where?'

'You wouldn't know if I told you, but I'll take you to the place—that is, if you'll let me talk to your prisoners first.'

Major Snaffle turned the proposition over in his mind.

'Take me to the place,' he commented at last; 'that means that you've got him hidden somewhere, I assume.'

Bernard looked into the shrewd, twinkling eyes with a new respect.

'That's about the size of it,' he assented.

'H'm—m! Yes. That makes a new offence of it, with *you* as an accessory, I take it—or ought I to say principal?'

Bernard was not at all dismayed by this shift in the situation.

'Call it what you like,' he answered. 'See here, major,' he went on, in a burst of confidence, 'this whole thing's got nothing to do with politics, or the potato crop, or anything else that need concern you. It's purely a private family matter. In a day or two it'll be in such shape that I can tell you all about it. For that matter, I could now, only it's such a deuce of a long story.'

The major thought again.

'All right,' he said. 'You can see the prisoners in my presence, and then I'll give you a chance to produce O'Daly. I ought to warn you, though, that it may be all used against you later on.'

'I'm not afraid of that,' replied Bernard.

A minute later he was following the Resident Magistrate up a winding flight of narrow stone stairs, none too clean. A constable, with a bunch of keys jingling in his hand, preceded them, and at the top threw open a heavy, iron-

cased door. The solitary window of the room they entered had been so blocked with thick bars of metal that very little light came through. Bernard, with some difficulty, made out two figures lying in one corner on a heap of straw and old cast-off clothing.

'Get up, you! Here's someone to see you!' called out the major, in the same tone he had used to the constables while they were helping on the overcoat.

Bernard, as he heard it, felt himself newly informed as to the spirit in which India was governed. Perhaps it was necessary there; but it made him grind his teeth to think of its use in Ireland.

The two figures scrambled to their feet, and Bernard shook hands with both.

'Egor! sur, you're a sight for sore eyes!' exclaimed Jerry effusively, wringing the visitor's fingers in his fat clasp. 'Are ye come to take us out o' this?'

'Yes; that'll be easy enough,' said Bernard. 'You got my telegram all right?'

Major Snaffle took his tablets from a pocket, and made a minute on them unobserved.

'I did—I did,' said Jerry buoyantly. Then with a changed expression he added, whispering. 'An' that same played the divil intirely. 'Twas for that they arristed us.'

'Don't whisper!' interposed the Resident Magistrate curtly.

'Egor! I'll say nothing at all,' said Jerry, who seemed now for the first time to consider the presence of the official.

'Yes—don't be afraid,' Bernard urged reassuringly. 'It's all right now. Tell me, is O'Daly in the place we know of?'

'He is, thin! Egor! unless he'd wings on him, and dug his way up through the sayling, like a blessed bat.'

'Did he make much fuss?'

'He did not—lastewise, we didn't stop to hear. He

came down wid us aisy as you plaze, an' I unlocked the dure. "'Tis a foine room," says I. "'Tis that," says he. "Here's whishky," says I. "I'd be lookin' for that wherever you were," says he, "even to the bowels of the earth." "An' why not?" says I. "What is it the priest read to us, that it makes a man's face to shine wid oil?" "A grand scholar ye are, Jerry," says he——'

'Cut it short, Jerry!' interposed Bernard. 'The main thing is—you left him there all right?'

'Well, thin, we did, sur, an' no mistake.'

'My plan is, major'—Bernard turned to the Resident Magistrate—'to take my friend here, Jerry Higgins, with us to the place I've been speaking of. We'll leave the other man here, as the editors say in my country, as a "guarantee of good faith." The only point is that we three must go alone. It wouldn't do to take any constables with us. In fact, there's a secret about it, and I wouldn't feel justified in giving it away even to you, if it didn't seem necessary. We simply confide it to you.'

'You can't confide anything to me,' said the Resident Magistrate. 'Understand clearly that I shall hold myself free to use everything I see and learn, if the interests of justice seem to demand it.'

'Yes; but that isn't going to happen,' responded Bernard. 'The interests of justice are all the other way, as you'll see later on. What I mean is, if the case isn't taken into court at all—as it won't be—we can trust you not to speak about this place.'

'Oh—in my private capacity—that is a different matter!'

'And you won't be afraid to go alone with us?—it isn't far from here, but, mind, it is downright lonesome.'

Major Snaffle covered the two men—the burly, stout Irishman and the lithe, erect, close-knit young American—with a comprehensive glance. The points of his mcus-

tache trembled momentarily upward in the beginning of a smile.

'No ; not the least bit afraid,' the dapper little gentleman replied.

The constables at the outer door stood with their big red hands to their caps, and saw with amazement the major, Bernard and Jerry pass them and the cars, and go down the street abreast. The villagers, gathered about the shop and cottage doors, watched the progress of the trio with even greater surprise. It seemed now, though, that nothing was too marvellous to happen in Muirisc. Some of them knew that the man with the flower in his coat was the stipendiary magistrate from Bantry, and, by some obscure connection, this came to be interpreted throughout the village as meaning that the bodies of both O'Daly and Miss Kate had been found. The stories which were born of this understanding flatly contradicted one another at every point as they flew about, but they made a good enough basis for the old women of the hamlet to start keening upon afresh.

The three men, pausing now and again to make sure they were not followed, went at a sharp pace around through the churchyard to the door of Jerry's abode, and entered it. The key and the lantern were found hanging upon their accustomed pegs. Jerry lighted the candle, pushed back the bed, and led the descent of the narrow, musty stairs through the darkness. The major came last of all.

'I've only been down here once myself,' Bernard explained to him, over his shoulder, as they made their stumbling way downward. 'It seems the place was discovered by accident in the old Fenian days. I suppose the convent used it in old times ; they say there was a skeleton of a monk found in it.'

'Whisht, now !' whispered Jerry as, having passed through

the long, low corridor leading from the staircase, he came to a halt at the doorway. 'Maybe we'll surproise him.'

He unlocked the door and flung it open. No sound of life came from within.

'Come along out o' that, Cormac!' called Jerry, into the mildewed blackness.

There was no answer.

Bernard almost pushed Jerry forward into the chamber, and, taking the lantern from him, held it aloft as he moved about. He peered under the table; he opened the great muniment chest; he pulled back the curtains to scrutinize the bed. There was no sign of O'Daly anywhere.

'Saints be wid us!' gasped Jerry, crossing himself; 'the divil's flown away wid his own!'

Bernard, from staring in astonishment into his confederate's fat face, let his glance wander to the major. That official had stepped over the threshold of the chamber, and stood at one side of the open door. He held a revolver in his gloved right hand.

'Gentlemen,' he said, in a perfectly calm voice, 'my father served in Ireland in the Fenian times, and an American-Irishman caught him in a trap, gagged him with gun-rags, and generally made a fool of him. Such things do not happen twice in any intelligent family. You will therefore walk through this door, arm-in-arm, handing me the lantern as you pass, and you will then go up the stairs six paces ahead of me. If either of you attempts to do anything else I will shoot him down like a dog!'

CHAPTER XII.

THE RETURN OF THE O'MAHONY.

BERNARD had never before had occasion to look into the small and ominously black muzzle of a loaded revolver. An involuntary twitching seized upon his muscles as he did so now, but his presence of mind did not desert him.

'No, don't shoot!' he called out. The words shook as he uttered them, and seemed to his nervously acute hearing to be crowded parts of a single sound. 'That's rank foolishness!' he added hurriedly. 'There's no trick! Nobody dreams of touching you. I give you my word I'm more astonished than you are!'

The major seemed to be somewhat impressed by the candour of the young man's tone. He did not lower the weapon, but he shifted his finger away from the trigger.

'That may or may not be the case,' he said, with a studious affectation of calm in his voice. 'At all events, you will at once do as I said.'

'But see here,' urged Bernard, 'there's an explanation to everything. I'll swear that old O'Daly was put in here by our friend there, Jerry Higgins. That's straight, isn't it, Jerry?'

'It is, sir!' said Jerry fervently, with eye askance on the revolver.

'And it's evident enough that he couldn't have got out by himself.'

'That he never did, sir.'

'Well, then, let's figure. How many people know of this place?'

'There's yoursilf,' responded Jerry meditatively, 'an' mesilf an' Linsky—me cousin, Joseph Higgins, I mane. That's all, if ye lave O'Daly out. An' that's what bothers me wits, who the divil *did* lave him out!'

'This cousin of yours, as you call him,' put in the Resident Magistrate—'what did you mean by speaking of him as Linsky? No lying, now!'

'Lying, is it, your honour? 'Tis aisy to see you're a stranger in these parts, to spake that word to me. Egor! 'tis me truth-tellin' 's kept me the poor man I am. I remember, now, sur, wance on a time when I was only a shlip of a lad——'

'What did you call him Linsky for?' Major Snaffle demanded peremptorily.

'Well, sir,' answered Jerry, unabashed, ''tis because he's freckles on him. "Linsky" is the Irish for a "freckled man!" Sure, O'Daly would tell you the same—if your honour could find him.'

The major did not look entirely convinced.

'I don't doubt it,' he said, with grim sarcasm; 'every man, woman and child of you all would tell the same. Come, now, we'll get up out of this. Link your arms together, and give me the lantern.'

'By your lave, sur,' interposed Jerry, 'that trick ye told us of your father—w'u'd that have been in a marteller tower, on the coast beyant Kinsale? Egor, sur, I was there! 'Twas me tuk the gun-rags from your father's mouth. Sure, 'tis in me ricollection as if 'twas yesterday. There stud The O'Mahony——'

At the sound of the name on his tongue, Jerry stopped short.

The secret of that expedition had been preserved so long. Was there danger in revealing it now?

To Bernard the name suggested another thought. He turned swiftly to Jerry.

'Look here!' he said. 'You forgot something. The O'Mahony knew of this place.'

'Well, thin, he did, sur,' assented Jerry. ''Twas him discovered it altogether.'

'Major,' the young man exclaimed, wheeling now to again confront the magistrate and his revolver, 'there's something mighty queer about this whole thing. I don't understand it any more than you do. Perhaps if we put our heads together, we could figure it out between us. It's foolishness to stand like this. Let me light the candles here, and all of us sit down like white men. That's it,' he added as he busied himself in carrying out his suggestion, to which the magistrate tacitly assented. 'Now we can talk. We'll sit here in front of you, and you can keep out your pistol if you like.'

'Well?' said Major Snaffle inquiringly, when he had seated himself between the others and the door, yet sideways, so that he might not be taken unawares by any newcomer.

'Tell him, Jerry, who this O'Mahony of yours was,' directed Bernard.

'Ah, thin, a grand divil of a man!' said Jerry, with enthusiasm. ''Twas he was the master of all Muirisc. Sure 'twas mesilf was the first man he gave a word to in Ireland whin he landed at the Cove of Cork. "Will ye come along wid me?" says he. "To the inds of the earth!" says I. And wid that——'

'He came from America, too, did he?' queried the major.

'Was that the same man who—who played the trick on my father? You seem to know about that.'

'Egor! 'twas the same!' cried Jerry, slapping his fat knee and chuckling with delight at the memory. ''Twas all in the winkin' of an eye—an' there he had him bound like a calf goin' to the fair, an' he cartin' him on his own back to the boat. Up wint the sails, an' off we pushed, an' the breeze caught us, an' whin the soldiers came, faith! 'twas safe out o' raych we were. An' thin The O'Mahony—God save him!—came to your honour's father——'

'Yes, I know the story,' interrupted the major. 'It doesn't amuse me as much as it does you. But what has this man—this O'Mahony—got to do with this present case?'

'It's like this,' explained Bernard, 'as I understand it: He left Ireland after this thing Jerry's been telling you about and went fighting in other countries. He turned his property over to two trustees to manage for the benefit of a little girl here—now Miss Kate O'Mahony. O'Daly was one of the trustees. What does he do but marry the girl's mother—a widow—and lay pipes to put the girl in a convent and steal all the money. I told you at the beginning that it was a family squabble. I happened to come along this way, got interested in the thing, and took a notion to put a spoke in O'Daly's wheel. To manage the convent end of the business I had to go away for two or three days. While I was gone, I thought it would be safer to have O'Daly down here out of mischief. Now you've got the whole story. Or no, that isn't all, for when I got back I find that the young lady herself has disappeared; and, lo and behold, here's O'Daly turned up missing, too!'

'What's that you say?' asked Major Snaffle. 'The young lady gone, also?'

'Is it Miss Kate?' broke in Jerry. 'Oh, thin, 'tis the

divil's worst work? Miss Kate not to be found—is not that your maning? 'Tis not consayvable.'

'Oh, I don't think there's anything serious in *that*,' said Bernard. 'She'll turn out to be safe and snug somewhere when everything's cleared up. But, in the meantime, where's O'Daly? How did he get out of here?'

The major rose and walked over to the door. He examined its fastenings and lock with attention.

'It can only be opened from the outside,' he remarked as he returned to his seat.

'I know that,' said Bernard. 'And I've got a notion that there's only one man alive who could have come and opened it.'

'Is it Lin—me cousin you mane?' asked Jerry. 'Egor! He was never out of me sight, daylight or dark, till they arrested us together.'

'No,' replied Bernard; 'I didn't mean him. The man I'm thinking of is The O'Mahony himself.'

Jerry leaped to his feet so swiftly that the major instinctively clutched his revolver anew. But there was no menace in Jerry's manner. He stood for a moment, his fat face reddened in the candle's pale glow, his gray eyes ashine, his mouth expanding in a grin of amazed delight. Then he burst forth in a torrent of eager questioning.

'Do you mane it?' he cried. 'The O'Mahony come back to his own ag'in? W'u'd he—is it—oh, thin, 'tis too good to be thrue, sir. An' we sittin' here—an' him near by! An' me not—ah, come along out o' this! An' ye're not desayvin' us, sur? He's thruly come back to us?'

'Don't go too fast,' remonstrated Bernard. 'It's only guesswork. There's nothing sure about it at all. Only there's no one else who *could* have come here.'

'Thru for ye, sur!' exclaimed Jerry, all afire now with joyous confidence. 'Tis a fine, grand intelligince ye

have, sur. An' will we be goin' now, major, to find him ?'

Under the influence of Jerry's great excitement the other two had risen to their feet as well.

The Resident Magistrate toyed dubiously with his revolver, casting sharp glances of scrutiny from one to the other of the faces before him the while he pondered the probabilities of truth in the curious tale to which he had listened.

The official side of him clamoured for its entire rejection as a lie. Like most of his class, with their superficial and hostile observation of an alien race, his instincts were all against crediting anything which any Irish peasant told him, to begin with. Furthermore, the half of this strange story had been related by an Irish-American—a type regarded by the official mind in Ireland with a peculiar intensity of suspicion. Yes, he decided, it was all a falsehood.

Then he looked into the young man's face once more, and wavered. It seemed an honest face. If its owner had borne even the homeliest and most plebeian of Saxon labels, the major was conscious that he should have liked him. The Milesian name carried prejudice, it was true, but—

'Yes, we will go up,' he said, 'in the manner I described. I don't see what your object would be in inventing this long rigmarole. Of course, you can see that if it isn't true it will be so much the worse for you.'

'We ought to see it by this time,' said Bernard, with a suggestion of weariness; 'you've mentioned it often enough. Here, take the lantern. We'll go up ahead. The door locks itself. I have the key.'

The three men made their way up the dark, tortuous flight of stairs, replaced the lantern and key on their peg in Jerry's room, and emerged once more into the open. They filled their lungs with long breaths of the fresh air, and then

looked rather vacuously at one another. The major had pocketed his weapon.

'Well, what's the programme?' asked Bernard.

Before any answer came, their attention was attracted by the figure of a stranger sauntering about among the ancient stones and black wooden crosses scattered over the weed-grown expanse of the churchyard. He was engaged in deciphering the names on the least weather-beaten of these crosses, but only in a cursory way, and with long intermittent glances over the prospect of ivy-grown ruins and gray walls, turrets, and gables beyond. As they watched him he seemed suddenly to become aware of their presence. Forthwith he turned and strolled toward them.

As he advanced they saw that he was a tall and slender man, whose blanched, close-cut hair and short moustache and chin-tuft produced an effect of extreme whiteness against a notably tanned and sunburnt skin. Though evidently well along in years, he walked erect, and with an elastic and springing step. He wore black clothes of foreign, albeit genteel, aspect. The major noted on the lapel of his coat a tell-tale gleam of red ribbon, and even before that had guessed him to be a Frenchman and a soldier. He leaped swiftly to the further assumption that this was The O'Mahony, and then hesitated, as Jerry showed no sign of recognition.

The stranger halted before them with a little nod and a courteous upward wave of his forefinger.

'A fine day, gentlemen,' he remarked, with politeness.

Major Snaffle had stepped in front of his companions.

'Permit me to introduce myself,' he said, with a sudden resolution: 'I am the Stipendiary Magistrate of the district. Would you kindly tell me if you are informed as to the present whereabouts of Mr. Cormac O'Daly, of this place?'

The other showed no trace of surprise on his browned face.

'Mr. O'Daly and his stepdaughter,' he replied affably enough, 'are just now doing me the honour of being my guests aboard my vessel in the harbour.'

Then a twinkle brightened his gray eyes as he turned their glance upon Jerry's red, moon-like face. He permitted himself the briefest of dry chuckles.

'Well, young man,' he said, 'they seem to have fed you pretty well, any way, since I saw you last.'

For another moment Jerry stared in round-eyed bewilderment at the speaker. Then with a wild 'Huroo!' he dashed forward, seized his hand, and wrung it in both of his.

'God bless ye! God bless ye!' he gasped between little formless ejaculations of dazed delight. 'God forgive me for not knowin' ye—you're that althered! But you're back amongst us, aloive and well, glory be to the world!'

He kept close to The O'Mahony's side as the group began now to move toward the gate of the churchyard, pointing to him with his fat thumb, as if to call all nature to witness this glorious event, and murmuring fondly to himself, 'You're come home to us!' over and over again.

'I am much relieved to learn what you tell me, Mr.—or, rather, I believe you are O'Mahony without the Mister,' said Major Snaffle, as they walked out upon the green. 'I dare say you know this has been a very bad winter all over the West and South, and crime seems to be increasing, instead of the reverse, as Spring advances. We have had the gravest reports about the disaffection in this district, especially among your tenants. That's why we gave such ready credence to the theory of murder.'

'Murder?' queried The O'Mahony. 'Oh, I see, you thought O'Daly had been murdered.'

'Yes; we arrested your man Higgins here yesterday. I

was just on the point of starting with him to Bantry Gaol an hour ago, when this young gentleman'—the major made a backward gesture to indicate Bernard—'came and said he knew where O'Daly was. He took me down to that curious underground chamber——'

'*Who* took you down, did you say?' asked The O'Mahony sharply. He turned on his heel as he spoke, as did the major.

To their considerable surprise, Bernard was no longer one of the party. Their dumfounded gaze ranged the expanse of common round about. He was nowhere to be seen.

The O'Mahony looked almost sternly at Jerry.

'Who is this young man you had with you, who seems to have taken to running things in my absence?' he demanded.

Poor Jerry, who had been staring upward at the newcomer with the dumb admiration of an affectionate spaniel, cowered humbly under this glance and tone.

'Well, your honour,' he stammered, plucking at the buttons of his coat in embarrassment, 'Egor! for the matter of that, I—I don't rightly know.'

CHAPTER XIII.

A MARINE MORNING CALL.

THE young man from Houghton County, strolling along behind these three men, all so busily occupied with one another, had of a sudden conceived the notion of dropping silently out of the party.

He had put the idea into execution, and was secure from observation on the farther side of the ditch, before the question of what he should do next shaped itself in his mind. Indeed, it was not until he had made his way to the little old-fashioned pier and come to an enforced halt among the empty barrels, drying nets, and general marine odds and ends which littered the landing-stage, that he knew what purpose had brought him hither.

But he perceived it now with great clearness. What other purpose, in truth, did existence itself contain for him?

‘I want to be rowed over at once to that vessel there,’ he called out to John Pat, who made one of a group of Muirisc men, in white jackets and soft black hats, standing beneath him on the steps. As he descended and took his seat in one of the waiting dingies, he noted other clusters of villagers along the shore, all concentrating an eager interest upon the yawl-rigged craft which lay at anchor in the harbour. They pointed to it incessantly as they talked, and others could be

seen running forward across the green to join them. He had never supposed Muirisc capable of such a display of animation.

'The people seem tickled to death to get The O'Mahony back again,' he remarked to John Pat, as they shot out under the first long sweep of the oars.

'They are, sur,' was the stolid response.

'Did your brother come back with him—that one-armed man who went after him—Malachy, I think they called him?'

'He did, sur,' said John Pat simply.

'Well'—Bernard bent forward impatiently—'tell me about it. Where did he find him? What do people say?'

'They do be saying manny things, sur,' responded the oarsman, rounding his shoulders to the work.

Bernard abandoned the inquiry with a grunt of discouragement, and contented himself perforce by watching the way in which the strange craft waxed steadily in size as they sped towards her. In a minute or two more he was alongside and clambered up a rope-ladder, which dangled its ends in the gently heaving water.

Save for a couple of obviously foreign sailors lolling in the sunshine upon a sail in the bows, there was no one on deck. As he looked about, however, in speculation, the apparition of a broad black hat, with long curled plumes, rose above the companion-way. He welcomed it with an exclamation of delight, and ran forward with outstretched hands.

The wearer of the hat, as she stepped upon the deck and confronted this demonstration, confessed to surprise by stopping short and lifting her black brows in inquiry. Bernard sheepishly let his hands fall to his side before the cool glance with which she regarded him.

'Is it viewing the vessel you are?' she asked. 'Her jigger lug-sail is unusual, I'm told.'

The young man's blue eyes glistened in reproachful appeal.

'What do I know about lugger jig-sails, or care, either?' he asked. 'I hurried here the moment I heard, to—to see *you*!'

'Tis flattered I am, I'm sure,' said Kate drily, looking away from him to the brown cliffs beyond.

'Come, be fair!' Bernard pleaded. 'Tell me what the matter is. I thought I had every reason to suppose you'd be glad to see me. It's plain enough that you are not; but you—you *might* tell me why. Or no,' he went on, with a sudden change of tone, 'I won't ask you. It's your own affair, after all. Only you'll excuse the way I rushed up to you? I'd had my head full of your affairs for days past, and then your disappearance—they thought you were drowned, you know—and I—I——'

The young man broke off with weak inconclusiveness, and turned as if to descend the ladder again. But John Pat had rowed away with the boat, and he looked blankly down upon the clear water instead.

Kate's voice sounded with a mellower tone behind him.

'I wouldn't have ye go in anger,' she said.

Bernard wheeled around in a flash.

'Anger!' he cried, with a radiant smile chasing all the shadows from his face. 'Why, how on earth *could* I be angry with *you*? No; but I was going away most mightily down in the mouth, though—that is,' he added, with a rueful kind of grin, 'if my boat hadn't gone off without me. But, honestly, now, when I drove in here this morning from Skibbereen I felt like a victorious general coming home from the wars. I'd done everything I wanted to do. I had the convent business blocked, and I had O'Daly on the hip; and I said to myself as we drove along: "She'll be glad to see me." I kept saying that all the while, straight from

Skibbereen to Muirisc. Well, then—you can guess for yourself—it was like tumbling backward into seven hundred feet of ice-water !'

Kate's face had gradually lost its implacable rigidity, and softened now for an instant into almost a smile.

'So much else has happened since that drive of yours,' she said gently. 'And what were ye doing at Skibbereen?'

'Well, you'll open *your* eyes !' predicted Bernard, all animation once again ; and then he related the details of his journey to Skibbereen and Cashel, of his interviews with the prelates, and of the manner in which he had, so to speak, wound up the career of the convent of the Hostage's Tears. 'It hadn't any real, rightdown legitimate title to existence, you know,' he concluded, 'these last five hundred years. All it needed was somebody to call attention to this fact, you see, and, bang ! the whole thing collapsed like a circus-tent in a cyclone !'

The girl had moved over to the gunwale, and now, leaning over the rail, looked meditatively into the water below.

'And so,' she said, with a pensive note in her voice, 'there's an end to the historic convent of the O'Mahonys ! No other family in Ireland had one—'twas the last glory of our poor hunted and plundered and poverty-stricken race ; and now even that must depart from us.'

'Well, hang it all !' remonstrated Bernard, 'it's better that way than to have *you* locked up all your life. I feel a little bit blue myself about closing up the old convent, but there's something else I feel a thousand times more strongly about still.'

'Yes, isn't it wonderful ?—the return of The O'Mahony !' said Kate. 'Oh, I hardly know still if I'm waking or not. 'Twas all like a blessed vision, and 'twas supernatural in its way ; I'll never believe otherwise. There was I on the

strand yonder, with the talisman he'd given me in me arms, praying for his return—and, lo and behold! there was this boat of his forninst me! Oh, never tell me the age of miracles is past!

'I won't, I promise you!' said Bernard with fervour. 'I've seen one myself since I've been here. It was at the Three Castles. I had my gun raised to shoot a heron, when an enchanted fairy——'

'Nothing to do but he'd bring me on board,' Kate put in hastily. 'Old Murphy swam out to him ahead of us screaming wid delight, like one possessed. And we sat and talked for hours—he telling strange stories of the wars he'd been in with the French, and thin with Don Carlos, and thin the Turks, and thin with some outlandish people in a Turkish province—until night fell and he wint ashore. And whin he came back he brought O'Daly with him—where in the Lord's name he found him passes my understanding—and thin we up sail and beat down till we stood off Three Castle Head. There we lay all night—O'Mahony gave up his cabin to me—and this morning back we came again. And now—the Lord be praised!—there's an ind to all our troubles!'

'Well,' said Bernard, with deliberation, 'I'm glad. I really *am* glad! Although, of course, it's plain enough to see, there's an end to me, too.'

A brief time of silence passed as the two, leaning side by side on the rail, watched the slow rise and sinking of the dull-green wavelets.

'You're off to Ameriky, thin?' Kate finally asked, without looking up.

The young man hesitated.

'I don't know yet,' he said slowly. 'I've got a curious hand dealt out to me. I hardly know how to play it. One thing is sure, though: hearts are trumps.'

He tried to catch her glance, but she kept her eyes resolutely bent upon the water.

'You know what I want to say,' he went on, moving his arm upon the rail till there was the least small fluttering suggestion of contact with hers. 'It must have said itself to you that day upon the mountain-top, or, for that matter, why, that very first time I saw you I went away head over heels in love. I tell you candidly, I haven't thought or dreamed for a minute of anything else from that blessed day. It's all been fairyland to me ever since. I've been *so* happy! May I stay in fairyland, Kate?'

She made no answer. Bernard felt her arm tremble against his for an instant before it was withdrawn. He noted, too, the bright carmine flush spring to her cheek, overmantle her dark face, and then fade away before an advancing pallor. A tear glittered among her downcast lashes.

'You mustn't deny me *my* age of miracles!' he murmuringly pleaded. 'It *was* a miracle that we should have met as we did; that I should have found you afterward as I did; that I should have turned up just when you needed help the most; that the stray discovery of an old mediæval parchment should have given me the hint what to do. Oh, don't *you* feel it, Kate? Don't *you* realize, too, dear, that there was fate in it all? That we belonged from the beginning to each other?'

Very white-faced and grave, Kate lifted herself erect and looked at him. It was with an obvious effort that she forced herself to speak, but her words were firm enough and her glance did not waver.

'Unfortunately,' she said, '*your* miracle has a trick in it. Even if 'twould have pleased me to believe in it, how can I, whin 'tis founded on deceit?'

Bernard stared at her in round-eyed wonderment,

'How "deceit"?' he stammered. 'How do you mean? Is it about kidnapping O'Daly? We only did that——'

'No; 'tis *this*,' said Kate. 'We'll be open with each other, and it's a grief to me to say it to you, whom I have liked so much, but you're no O'Mahony at all.'

The young man with difficulty grasped her meaning.

'Well, if you remember, I never said I knew my father was one of *the* O'Mahonys, you know. All I said was that he came from somewhere in County Cork. Surely there was no deceit in that.'

She shook her head.

'No; what ye said was that your name was O'Mahony.'

'Well, so it is. Good heavens! *That* isn't disputed, is it?'

'And you said, moreover,' she continued gravely, 'that your father knew *our* O'Mahony as well almost as he knew himself.'

'Oh—h!' exclaimed Bernard, and fell thereupon into confused rumination upon many thoughts which till then had been curiously subordinated in his mind.

'And now,' Kate went on, with a sigh, 'whin I mintion this to The O'Mahony himself, he says he never in his life knew anyone of your father's name. O'Daly was witness to it as well.'

Bernard had his elbows once more on the rail. He pushed his chin hard against his upturned palms and stared at the skyline, thinking as he had never been forced to think before.

'Surely there was no need for the—the misstatement,' said Kate, in mournful recognition of what she took to be his dumb self-reproach. 'See now how useless it was—and a thousand times worse than useless! See how it prevints me now from respecting you and being properly grateful to you for what you've done on me behalf, and—and——'

She broke off suddenly. To her consternation, she had discovered that the young man, so far from being stricken speechless in contrition, was grinning gaily at the distant landscape.

Turning with abruptness, she walked indignantly aft. Cormac O'Daly had come up from below, and stood wistfully gazing landward over the taffrail. She joined him, and stood at his side flushed and wrathful.

Bernard was not wholly able to chase the smile from his face as he rose and sauntered over toward her. She turned her back as he approached, and tapped the deck nervously with her foot. Nothing dismayed, he addressed himself to O'Daly, who seemed unable to decide whether also to look the other way or not.

'Good-morning, sir,' he said affably. 'You're quite a stranger, Mr. O'Daly.'

Kate, at his first word, had walked briskly away up the deck. Cormac's little black eyes snapped viciously at the intruder.

'At laste I'm not such a stranger,' he retorted, 'but that me thrue name is known, an' I'm here be the invitation of the owner.'

'I'm sorry you take things so hard, Mr. O'Daly,' said Bernard. 'An easy disposition would come very handy to you, seeing the troubles you've got to go through with yet.'

The small man gazed apprehensively at his tormentor.

'I don't folly ye,' he stammered.

'I'm going to propose that you *shall* follow me, sir,' replied the young man in an authoritative tone. 'I understand that in conversation last night between your step-daughter and you and the—the owner of this vessel, the question of my name was brought up, and that it was decided that I was a fraud. Now, I'm not much given to making a fuss, but there are some things, especially at

certain times, that I can't stand—not for one little minute. This is one of 'em. Now, I'm going to suggest that we hail one of those boats there and go ashore at once—you and Miss Kate and I—and clear this matter up without delay.'

'We'll remain here till The O'Mahony returns!' said O'Daly stiffly. 'Twas his request. 'Tis no interest of mine to clear the matther up, as you call it.'

'Well, it was no interest of mine, Mr. O'Daly,' remarked Bernard placidly, 'to go over the mining contracts you've made as trustee during the past dozen years, and figure out all the various items of the estate's income; but I've done it. It makes a very curious little balance-sheet. I had intended to fetch it down with me to-day, and go over it with you in your underground retreat.'

'In the devil's name, who are you?' snarled Cormac, with livid face and frightened eyes.

'That's just what I proposed we should go right now and settle. If you object, why, I shall go alone. But in that case it may happen that I shall have to discuss with the gentleman who has just arrived the peculiarities of that balance-sheet I spoke of. What do you think, eh?'

O'Daly did not hesitate.

'Sur, I'll go wid you,' he said. 'The O'Mahony has no head for figures. 'Twould be flat injustice to bother him wid 'em, and he only newly landed, an' wid so manny other things on his mind.'

Bernard walked lightly across the deck, humming a little tune to himself as he advanced, and halting a short foot from where Kate stood.

'O'Daly's going ashore with me,' he remarked.

'He dare not!' she answered, over her shoulder. 'The O'Mahony bade him stop here.'

'Well, this is more or less of a free country, and he's

changed his mind. He's going with me. I—I want you to come, too.'

'Tis likely!' she said, with a derisive sniff.

'Kate,' he said, drawing nearer to her by a step, and speaking in low, earnest tones, 'I hate to plead this sort of thing; but you have had nothing but candid and straightforward friendship from me. I've done a trifle of lying *for* you, perhaps, but none *to* you. I've worked for you as I never worked for myself. I've run risks for you which nothing else under the sun would have tempted me into. All that doesn't matter. Leave that altogether out of the question. I did it because I love you. And for that self-same reason I come now and ask this favour of you. You can send me away afterward, if you like; but you *can't* bear to stop here now, thinking these things of me, and refusing to come out and learn for yourself whether they are true or false; for that would be unfair, and it's not in your blood—in *our* blood—to be that.'

The girl neither turned to him nor spoke, but he could see the outline of her face as she bowed her head and gazed in silence at the murmuring water; and something in this sight seemed to answer him.

He strode swiftly to the other side of the vessel, and exultantly waved his handkerchief in signal to the boatmen on the shore.

CHAPTER XIV.

DIAMOND CUT PASTE.

THE O'MAHONY sat once more in the living-room of his castle—sat very much at his ease, with a cigar between his teeth, and his feet comfortably stretched out toward the blazing bank of turf on the stone hearth.

A great heap of papers lay upon the table at his elbow—the contents of O'Daly's strong-box, the key to which he had brought with him from the vessel—but not a single band of red tape had been untied. The O'Mahony's mood for investigation had exhausted itself in the work of getting the documents out. His hands were plunged deep into his trousers pockets now, and he gazed into the glowing peat.

His home-coming had been a thing to warm the most frigid heart. His own beat delightedly still at the thought of it. From time to time there reached his ears from the square without a vague braying noise, the sound of which curled his lips into the semblance of a grin. It seemed so droll to him that Muirisc should have a band—a fervent half-dozen of amateurs, with ancient and battered instruments which successive generations of regimental musicians had pawned at Skibbereen or Bantry, and on which the village volunteers played now, neither by note nor by ear, but solely by main strength.

The tumult of discord which they produced was dreadful, but The O'Mahony liked it. He had been pleasurably touched, too, by the wild enthusiasm of greeting with which Muirisc had met him when he disclosed himself on the main street, walking up to the police-station with Major Snaffle and Jerry. All the older inhabitants he knew, and shook hands with. The sight of younger people among them whom he did not know alone kept alive the recollection that he had been absent twelve long years. Old and young alike, and preceded by the hurriedly summoned band, they had followed him in triumphal procession when he came down the street again, with the liberated Jerry and Linsky at his heels. They were still outside, cheering and madly bawling their delight whenever the bandsmen stopped to take breath. Jerry, Linsky, and the one-armed Malachy were out among them, broaching a cask of porter from the castle cellar; Mrs. Fergus and Mrs. Sullivan were in the kitchen cutting up bread and meat to go with the drink.

No wonder there were cheers! Small matter for marvel was it, either, that The O'Mahony smiled as he settled down still more lazily in his armchair and pushed his feet further toward the fire.

Presently he must go and fetch O'Daly and Kate from the vessel—or no, when Jerry came in he would send him on that errand. After his long journey The O'Mahony was tired and sleepy—all the more as he had sat up most of the night, out on deck, talking with the recreant and now abjectly abased O'Daly. What a journey it had been! Post-haste from far away, barbarous Armenia, where the faithful Malachy had found him in command of a Turkish battalion, resting after the task of suppressing a provincial rebellion. Home they had wended their tireless way by Constantinople and Malta and mistral-swept Marseilles, and thence by land across to Havre. Here, oddly enough, he

had fallen in with the French merchant to whom he had sold the *Hen Hawk* twelve years before—the merchant's son had served with him in the Army of the Loire three years later, and was his friend—and he had been able to gratify the sudden fantastic whim of returning as he had departed, in the quaint, flush-decked, yawl-rigged old craft. It all seemed like a dream !

‘If your honour plazes, there’s a young gintleman at the dure—a Misther O’Mahony, from America—w’u’d be afther having a word wid ye.’

It was the soft voice of good old Mrs. Sullivan that spoke.

The O’Mahony woke with a start from his complacent day-dream. He drew his feet in, sat upright, and bit hard on his cigar for a minute in scowling reflection.

‘Show him in,’ he said at last, and then straightened himself truculently to receive this meddling new-comer. He fastened a stern and hostile gaze upon the door.

Bernard seemed to miss entirely the frosty element in his reception. He advanced with a light step, hat in hand, to the side of the hearth, and held one hand with familiar nonchalance over the blaze, while he nodded amiably at his frowning host.

‘I skipped off rather suddenly this morning,’ he said with a pleasant half-smile, ‘because I didn’t seem altogether needful to the party for the minute, and I had something else to do. I’ve dropped in now to say that I’m as glad as anybody here to see you back again. I’ve only been about Muirisc a few weeks, but I already feel as if I’d been born and brought up here. And so I’ve come around to do my share of the welcoming.’

‘You *seem* to have made yourself pretty much at home, sir,’ commented The O’Mahony icily.

‘You mean putting O’Daly down in the family vault?’

queried the young man. 'Yes, perhaps it was making a little free, but, you see, time pressed. I couldn't be in two places at once, now, could I? And while I went off to settle the convent business there was no telling what O'Daly mightn't be up to if we left him loose; so I thought it was best to take the liberty of shutting him up. You found him there, I judge, and took him out.'

The O'Mahony nodded curtly, and eyed his visitor with cool disfavour.

'As long as you're here, sir, you might as well take a seat,' he said, after a minute's pause. 'That's it. Now, sir, first of all, perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me who you are, and what the devil you mean, sir, by coming here and meddling in this way with other people's private affairs.'

'Curious, isn't it,' remarked the young man from Houghton County blandly, 'how we Americans lug in the word "sir" every other breath? They tell me no Englishman ever uses it at all.'

The O'Mahony stirred in his chair.

'I'm not as easy-going a man or as good-natured as I used to be, my young friend,' he said, with an affectation of calm, through which ran a threatening note.

'I shouldn't have thought it,' protested Bernard. 'You seemed the pink of politeness out there in the graveyard this morning. But I suppose years of campaigning——'

'See here,' the other interposed abruptly, 'don't fool with me! It's a risky game. Unless you want trouble, stop monkeying and answer my question straight. Who are you?'

The young man had ceased smiling. His face had all at once become very grave, and he was staring at The O'Mahony with wide-open, bewildered eyes.

'True enough!' he gasped, after his gaze had been so

protracted that the other half rose from his seat in impatient anger. 'Why—yes, sir; I'll swear to it! Well, this *does* beat all!'

'Your *cheek* beats all!' broke in The O'Mahony, springing to his feet in a gust of choleric heat.

Bernard stretched forth a restraining hand.

'Wait a minute,' he said, in evidently sincere anxiety not to be misunderstood, and picking his words slowly as he went along; 'hold on—I'm not fooling! Please sit down again. I've got something important, and mighty queer, too, to say to you.'

The O'Mahony, with a grunt of reluctant acquiescence, sat down once more. The two men looked at each other with troubled glances, the one vaguely suspicious, the other still round-eyed with surprise.

'You ask who I am,' Bernard began. 'I'll tell you. I was a little shaver—oh, six or seven years old—just at the beginning of the War. My father enlisted when they began raising troops. The recruiting-tent in our town was in the old hay-market, by the canal bridge. It seems to me now that they must have kept my father there for weeks after he'd put his uniform on. I used to go there every day, I know, with my mother to see him. But there was another soldier there—this is the queer thing about a boy's memory—I remember him ever so much better than I do my own father. It's—let's see—eighteen years now, but I'd know him to this day wherever I met him. He carried a gun, and he walked all day long up and down in front of the tent like a polar bear in his cage. We boys thought he was the most important man in the whole army. Some of them knew him—he belonged to our section originally, it seems—and they said he'd been in lots of wars before. I can see him now as plainly as—as I see you. His name was Tisdale—Zeb, I think it was—no, Zeke Tisdale.'

Perhaps The O'Mahony changed colour. He sat with his back to the window, and the ruddy glow from the peat blaze made it impossible to tell. But he did not take his sharp gray eye off Bernard's face, and it never so much as winked.

'Very interesting,' he said, 'but it doesn't go very far toward explaining who you are. If I'm not mistaken, *that* was the question.'

'Me?' answered Bernard. 'Oh yes, I forgot that. Well, sir, I am the only surviving son of one Hugh O'Mahony, who was a shoemaker in Tecumseh, who served in the same regiment—perhaps the same company—with this Zeke Tisdale I've told you about, and who, after the War, moved out to Michigan, where he died.'

An oppressive silence settled upon the room. The O'Mahony still looked his companion straight in the face, but it was with a lack-lustre eye and with the effect of having lost the physical power to look elsewhere. He drummed with his fingers in a mechanical way on the arms of the chair as he kept up this abstracted and meaningless gaze.

There fell suddenly upon this long-continued silence the reverberation of an exceptionally violent outburst of uproar from the square.

'Cheers for The O'Mahony!' came from one of the lustiest of the now well-lubricated throats; and then followed a scattering volley of wild hurroos and echoing yells.

As these sounds died away a shrill voice lifted itself, screaming:

'Come out, O'Mahony, an' spake to us! We're dyin' for a sight of you!'

The elder man had lifted his head and listened. Then he squinted and blinked his eyelids convulsively and turned

his head away, but not before Bernard had caught the glint of moisture in his eyes.

The young man had not been conscious of being specially moved by what was happening. All at once he could feel his pulses vibrating like the strings of a harp. His heart had come up into his throat. Nothing was visible to him but the stormy affection which Muirisc bore for this war-born, weather-beaten old impostor. And, clearly enough, *he* himself was thinking of only that.

Bernard rose and stepped to the hearth, instinctively holding one of his hands backward over the fire, though the room was uncomfortably hot.

'They're calling for you outside, sir,' he said, almost deferentially.

The remark seemed stupid after he had made it, but nothing else had come to his tongue.

The lurking softness in his tone caught the other's ear, and he turned about fiercely.

'See here!' he said, between his teeth. 'How much more of this is there going to be? I'll fight you where you stand—here—now—old as I am—or I'll—I'll do something else—anything else—but damn me if I'll take any slack or soft-soap from *you*!'

This unexpected resentment of his sympathetic mood impressed Bernard curiously. Without hesitation he stretched forth his hand. No responsive gesture was offered, but he went on, not heeding this.

'My dear sir,' he said, 'they are calling for you, as I said. They are hollering for "The O'Mahony of Muirisc." You are The O'Mahony of Muirisc, and will be till you die. You hear *me*!'

The O'Mahony gazed for a puzzled minute into his young companion's face.

'Yes—I hear you,' he said hesitatingly.

'*You*—are *The*—O'Mahony—of—Muirisc!' repeated Bernard, with a deliberation and emphasis; 'and I'll whip any man out of his boots who says you're not, or so much as looks as if he doubted it!'

The old soldier had put his hands in his pockets, and begun walking slowly up and down the chamber. After a time he looked up.

'I s'pose you can prove all this—this that you've been saying?' he asked, in a musing way.

'No—prove nothing! Don't want to prove anything!' rejoined Bernard stoutly.

Another pause. The elder man halted once more in his meditative pacing to and fro.

'And you say I *am* The—The O'Mahony of Muirisc?' he remarked.

'Yes, I said it; I mean it!'

'Well, but——'

'There's no "but" about it, sir!'

'Yes there is,' insisted The O'Mahony, drawing near and tentatively surrendering his hand to the other's prompt and cordial clasp. 'Supposing it all goes as you say—supposing I *am* The O'Mahony—what are *you* going to be?'

The young man's eyes glistened, and a happy change—half smile, half blush—blossomed all over his face.

'Well,' he said, still holding the other's hand in his, 'I don't know just how to tell you—because I am not posted on the exact relationships; but I'll put it this way: If it was your daughter that you'd left on the vessel there with O'Daly, I'd say that what I propose to be was your son-in-law. See?'

It was only too clear that The O'Mahony did see. He had frowned at the first adumbration of the idea. He pulled his hand away now, and pushed the young man from him.

'No, you don't !' he cried angrily. 'No, sirree ! You can't make any such bargain as that with *me* ! Why, I'd 'a' thought you'd 'a' known me better ! *Me* going into a deal with little Katie to be traded off ? Why, man, you're a fool !'

The O'Mahony turned on his heel contemptuously and strode up and down the room, with indignant sniffs at every step. All at once he stopped short.

'Yes,' he said, as if in answer to an argument with himself, 'I'll tell you to get out of this ! You can go and do what you like—just whatever you damn please—but I'm boss here yet, at all events, and I don't want anybody around me who could propose that sort of thing. *Me* make Kate marry you in order to feather my own nest ! There's the door, young man !'

Bernard looked obdurately past the outstretched forefinger into the other's face.

'Who said anything about your *making* her marry me ?' he demanded. 'And who talked about a deal ? Why, look here, colonel'—the random title caught the ear of neither speaker nor impatient listener—'look at it this way : They all love you here in Muirisc ; they're just boiling over with joy because they've got you here. That sort of thing doesn't happen so often between landlords and tenants that one can afford to bust it up when it does occur. And I—well, a man would be a brute to have tried to come between you and these people. Well, then, it's just the same with me and Katie. We love each other—we are glad when we're together ; we're unhappy when we're apart. And so I say in this case as I said in the other, a man would be a brute——'

'Do you mean to tell me——' The O'Mahony broke in, and then was himself cut short.

'Yes, I *do* mean to tell you,' interrupted Bernard ; 'and,

what's more, she means to tell you, too, if you put on your hat and walk over to the convent.' Noting the other's puzzled glance, he hastened on to explain: 'I rowed over to your sloop, or ship, or whatever you call it, after I left you this morning, and I brought her and O'Daly back with me on purpose *to* tell you.'

Before the O'Mahony had mastered this confusing piece of information, much less prepared verbal comment upon it, the door was thrust open, and ushered in, as it were, by the sharply resounding clamour of the crowd outside, the burly figure of Jerry Higgins appeared.

'For the love o' God, your honour,' he exclaimed in a high fever of excitement, 'come along out to 'em! Sure, they're that mad to lay eyes on ye, they're 'ating each other like starved lobsters in a pot! Ould Barney O'Driscoll's the divil wid the dhrink in him, an' there he is ragin' up an' down, wid his big brass horn for a weapon, crackin' skulls right an' left; an' black Clancy's asleep in his drum—'twas Sheehan putt him into it neck an' crop—an' 'tis three constables' work to howld the boys from rollin' him round in it, an'—an'——'

'All right, Jerry,' said the O'Mahony; 'I'll come right along.'

He put on his hat and relighted his cigar in slow and silent deliberation. He tarried thereafter for a moment or two with an irresolute air, looking at the smoke-rings abstractedly as he blew them into the air.

Then, with a sudden decision, he walked over and linked Bernard's arm in his own. They went out together without a word. In fact, there was no need for words.

CHAPTER XV.

A FAREWELL FEAST.

WE enter the crumbling portals of the ancient convent of the O'Mahonys for a final visit. The reddened sun, with its promise of a kindly morrow, hangs low in the western heavens and pushes the long shadow of the gateway onward to the very steps of the building. We have no call to set the harsh-toned jangling old bell in motion. The door is open and the hall is swept for guests.

This hour of waning day marked an unique occurrence in the annals of the House of the Hostage's Tears. Its nuns were too aged and infirm to go to the castle to offer welcome to the newly-retuned head of the family. So The O'Mahony came to them instead. He came like the fine old chieftain of a sept, bringing his train of followers with him. For the first time within the recollection of man a long table had been spread in the reception-hall, and about it were gathered the baker's dozen of people we have come to know in Muirisc. Even Mrs. Sullivan, flushed scarlet from her labour in the ill-appointed convent kitchen and visibly disheartened at its meagre results, had her seat at the board beside Father Jago. But they were saved from the perils of a party of thirteen, because the one-armed Malachy, dour-faced and silent, but secretly bursting with pride and joy, stood at his old post behind his master's chair.

There had not been much to eat, and the festival stood thus early at the stage of the steaming kettle, and the glasses so piping hot that fingers shrank from contact, though the spirit beckoned. And there was not one less than twelve of these scorching tumblers—for in remote Muirisc the fame of Father Mathew remained a vague and colourless thing, like that of Mahomet or Sir Isaac Newton—and, moreover, was not The O'Mahony come home?

'Yes, sir,' The O'Mahony said from his place at the right hand of Mother Agnes, venturing an experimental thumb against his glass and sharply withdrawing it, 'wherever I went, in France or Spain, or among the 'Turks, I found there had been a soldier O'Mahony there before me. Why, a French general told me that right at one time—quite a spell back, I should judge—there were fourteen O'Mahonys holding commissions in the French army. Yes, I remember, it was in the time of Louis XIX.

'You're wrong, O'Mahony,' interrupted Kate, with the smile of a spoiled favourite child; 'twas nineteen O'Mahonys in the reign of Louis XIV.'

'Same thing,' he replied pleasantly. 'It's as broad as it is long. There the O'Mahonys were, any way, and every man of 'in a fighter. It set me to figuring that before they went away—when they were all cooped up here together on this little neck of land—things must have been kept pretty well up to boiling-point all the year round.'

'An' who was it ever had the power to coop 'em up here?' demanded Cormac O'Daly, with enthusiasm. 'Heaven be their bed! 'Twas not in thim O'Mahonys to endure it! Forth they wint in all directions, wid bowld raids an' incursions, bating the O'Heas an' defating the Coffeys wid slaughter, an' as for the O'Driscolls—huh!—just tearing 'em up bodily be the roots! Sir, 'twas a proud day whin an O'Daly first attached himself to the house of

the O'Mahonys—such grand min as they were—so magnanimous, so pious, so intelligent, so ferocious an' terrifying—sir, me old blood warms at thought of 'em !

The caloric in Cormac's veins impelled him at this juncture to rise to his feet. He took a sip from his glass, then adjusted his spectacles, and produced the back of an envelope from his pocket.

'O'Mahony,' he said, with a voice full of emotion, 'I've a slight pome here, just stated down hurriedly, that I'll take the liberty to rade to the company assimbled. 'Tis this way it runs :

“ Hark to thim joyous sounds that rise,
Making the face of Muirisc to be glad !
'Tis the devil's job to believe one's eyes——”

'Well, thin, don't be trying !' brusquely interrupted Mrs. Fergus.

As the poet paused and strove to cow his spouse with a sufficiently indignant glance, she leaned over the table and addressed him in a stage whisper, almost audible to the deaf old nuns themselves.

'Sit down, me man !' she adjured him. "'Tis laughing at ye they are ! Sure, doesn't his honour know how different a chune ye raised while he was away ! 'Tis your part to sing small now, an' keep the ditch betwixt you an' observation.'

Cormac sat down at once, and submissively put the paper back in his pocket. It was a humble and wistful glance which he bent through his spectacles at the chieftain, as that worthy resumed his remarks.

The O'Mahony did not pretend to have missed the adjuration of Mrs. Fergus.

'That started off well enough, O'Daly,' he said ; 'but you're getting too old to have to hustle around and turn out poetry to order, as you used to. I've decided to allow you

to retire—to sort of knock off your shoes and let you run in pasture. You can move into one of the smaller houses in a day or two, and jest take things easy.'

'But, sir—me secretarial juties——' put in O'Daly, with quavering voice.

'There'll be no manner of trouble about that,' said The O'Mahony reassuringly. 'My friend here, Joseph Higgins, of Boston, he will look out for that. I don't know that you're aware of it, but I took a good deal of interest in him many years ago—before I went away—and I foresaw a future for him. It hasn't turned out jest as I expected, but I'm satisfied, all the same. Before I left I arranged that he should pursue his studies during my absence.' A grimly quizzical smile played around the white corners of his moustache as he added: 'I understand that he jest stuck to them studies night and day—never left 'em once for so much as to go out and take a walk for the whole twelve years.'

'Surely, sir,' interposed Father Jago, 'that's most remarkable! I never heard tell of such studiosity even in Maynooth itself!'

The O'Mahony looked gravely across the table at Jerry, whose broad, shining face was lobster-red with the exertion of keeping itself straight.

'I believe there's hardly another such case on record,' he said. 'Well, as I was remarking, it's only natural now that I should make him my secretary and bookkeeper. I've had a long talk with him about it—and about other things, too—and I guess there ain't much doubt about our getting along together all right.'

'And is it your honour's intintion—will—will he take over my functions as bard as well?' Cormac ventured to inquire. He added in deprecating tones: 'Sure, they've always been considered hereditary.'

'No, I think we'll let the bard business slide for the time being,' answered The O'Mahony. 'You see, I've been getting along now a good many years without any poet, so 't I've got used to it. There was one fellow out at Plevna—an English newspaper man—who did compose some verses about me—he seemed to think they were quite funny—but I shot off one of his knee-pans, and that sort of put a damper on poetry, so far as I was concerned. However, we'll see how your boy turns out. Maybe, if he takes a shine to that sort of thing——'

'Then you're to stay with us?' inquired Mother Agnes. 'So grand ye are wid your decorations an' your foreign titles—sure, they tell me you're Chevalier an' O'Mahony Bey both at wance—'twill be dull as ditch-water for you here.'

'No, I reckon not,' replied The O'Mahony. 'I've had enough of it. It's nigh on to forty years since I first tagged along in the wake of a drum with a musket on my shoulder. I don't know why I didn't come back years ago. I was too shiftless to make up my mind, I suppose. No, I'm going to stay here—going to die here—right among these good Muirisc folks, who are thumping each other to pieces outside on the green. Talk about its being dull here—why, Mother Agnes, 'twould have done your venerable heart good to see old Barney O'Driscoll laying about him with that overgrown, double-barrelled trumpet of his. I haven't seen anything better since we butted our heads up against Schipka Pass.'

''Twill be grand tidings for the people—that same,' interposed Kate, with happiness in glance and tone.

The O'Mahony looked tenderly at her.

'That reminds me,' he said, and then turned to the nuns, lifting his voice in token that he especially addressed them. 'There was some talk, I understand, about little Katie here——'

'Little, is it!' laughed the girl. 'Sure, to please you I'd begin growing again, but that there'd be no house in Muirisc to hold me.'

'Some talk about big Kate here, then,' pursued the O'Mahony, 'going into the convent. Well, of course that's all over with now.' He hesitated for a moment, and decided to withhold all that cruel information about episcopal interference. 'And I've been thinking it over,' he resumed, 'and I've come to the conclusion that we'd better not try to bolster up the convent with new girls from outside. It's always been kept strictly inside the family. Now that that can't be done, it's better to let it end with dignity. And that it can't help doing, because as long as it's remembered at all, men will say that its last nuns were its best nuns.'

He closed with a little bow to the Ladies of the Hostage's Tears. Mother Agnes acknowledged the salutation and the compliment with a silent inclination of her veiled head. If her heart took grief, she did not say so.

'And your new secretary,' put in Cormac, diffidently yet with persistence, 'has he that acquaintance an' familiarity wid mining technicalities and contrahcts that would fit him to dale wid 'em satisfactorily?'

A trace of asperity, under which O'Daly definitely wilted, came into The O'Mahony's tone.

'There is such a thing as being too smart about mining contracts,' he said with meaning. Then, with a new light in his eyes, he went on: 'The luckiest thing that ever happened on this footstool, I take it, has occurred right here. The young man who sits opposite me is a born O'Mahony, the only son of the man who, if I hadn't turned up, would have had rightful possession of all these estates. You have seen him about here for some weeks. I understand that you all like him. Indeed, it's been described

to me that Mrs. Fergus here has quite an affection for him—motherly, I presume.'

Mrs. Fergus raised her hand to her hair, and preened her head.

'An' not so old, nayther, O'Mahony,' she said defiantly. 'Wasn't I married first whin I was a mere shlip of a girl?'

Sister Maev looked at Mother Agnes, and lifted up both her hands. The O'Mahony proceeded undisturbed:

'As I've said, you all like him. I like him, too, for his own sake, and—and his father's sake—and—but that can wait for a minute. It's a part of the general good luck which has brought him here that he turns out to be a trained mining engineer—just the sort of man, of all others, that Muirisc needs. He tells me that we've only scratched the surface of things roundabout here yet. He promises to get more wealth for us and for Muirisc out of an acre than we've been getting out of a townland. Malachy, go out and look for old Murphy, and, whether he can walk or not, bring him in here.'

The O'Mahony composedly busied himself in filling his glass afresh, the while Malachy was absent on his quest. The others, turning their attention to the boyish-faced, blushing young man whom the speaker had eulogized so highly, noted that he sat next, and perhaps unnecessarily close, to Kate, and that she, also, betrayed a suspicious warmth of countenance. Vague comprehension of what was coming began to stir in their minds as Malachy reappeared. Behind him came Murphy, who leaned against the wall by the door, hat in hand, and clung with a piercing, hawk-like gaze to the lightest movement on the master's face.

The O'Mahony rose to his feet, glass in hand.

'Murphy,' he said, 'I gave her to you to look after—to take care of—the Lady of Muirisc.'

'You did, sir!' shouted the withered and grimy old water-rat, straightening himself against the wall.

'You've done it well,' sir,' declared The O'Mahony. 'I'm obliged to you. And I wanted you in particular to hear what I'm going to say. Malachy, get a glass for yourself and give one to Murphy.'

The one-armed servitor leaned gravely forward and whispered in The O'Mahony's ear.

'I don't care a button,' the other protested. 'You can see him home afterwards. This is as much his funeral as it is anybody else's on earth. That's it. Are you all filled? Now, then, ladies and gentlemen, I am getting along in years. I am a childless man. You've all been telling me how much I've changed these last twelve years. There's one thing I hain't changed a bit in. I used to think that the cutest, cunningest, all-fired loveliest little girl on earth was Katie here. Well, I think just the same now. If I was her father, mother, sister, hired girl and dog under the waggon, all in one, I couldn't be fonder of her than I am. She was the apple of my eye then; she is now. I'd always calculated that she should be my heir. Well, now, there turns up this young man, who is as much an O'Mahony of the real stock as Kate is. There's a Providence in these things. They love each other. They will marry. They will live right in this castle here, where they've promised to give me board and lodging, and when I am gone they will come after me. I'm going to have you all get up and drink the health of my young—ah, nephew, Bernard, and of his bride, our Kate, here, and—and of the line of O'Mahonys to come.'

When the clatter of exclamations and clinking glasses had died down, it was Kate who made response—Kate, with

her blushing, smiling face held proudly up and a glow of joyous affection in her eyes.

‘If that same line of O’Mahonys to come was to stretch from here to the very top of Mount Gabriel,’ she said, in a clear voice, ‘there’d not be amongst thim all the ayqual to *our* O’Mahony!’

THE END.



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